

## Cheers, jeers at the Capitol

Politics distracts from message at Veterans Day on the Hill

ST. PAUL — About 750 veterans and their supporters showed up to Veterans Day on the Hill at the St. Paul Armory and the Capitol Rotunda.

The 2025 version sure felt more political in nature than past versions of the annual gathering of veterans from the eight congressional

chartered service organizations called the Minnesota Commanders' Task Force.

"We would rather have our focus be on getting our legislation passed here in Minnesota, not on national politics," said Minnesota American Legion Commander Carl Moon, who chairs the CTF this year.

Coverage from Twin Cities news media focused on when Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a 2024 candidate for vice president who still is making speaking engagements in other states, spoke before the crowd at the Rotunda. It was there he was greeted by jeers and cheers,

Continued on Page 8



The Joint JROTC Color Guard led the march to the Capitol on April 8. The color guard has students from Como Park, Johnson, Washington and Humboldt high schools in St. Paul.

## Be the One!

Nat'l commander spreads message of suicide prevention, second chances

By Tim Engstrom

LA CRESCENT — American Legion National Commander James A. "Jim" LaCoursiere Jr. came to Minnesota the last week of March with a message: "It's OK to not be OK, and you know that I am on your side."

Preventing veteran suicide, he said, is the top priority of The American Legion. He called on members to be compassionate about struggling veterans.

"Be the One," he said, "is not a campaign slogan. It is a mission."

LaCoursiere, whose home post is Moosup Post 91 in Connecticut, visited Forest Lake Post 225, Apple Valley Post 1776, Pine Island Post 184, La Crescent Post 595, Eyota Post 551, Faribault Post 43, Fridley Post 303, Buffalo Post 270, Paynesville Post 271, Granite Falls Post 69 and Slayton Post 64.

The La Crescent stop was at the La Crescent Area Event Center. The Granite Falls one was at the Fagan Fighters World War II Museum. The Slayton visit was at the Murray County Fairgrounds in the 4-H Building. The remainder were at post homes.

The national commander also found time to meet with leadership of the Minnesota Department of Veterans



American Legion National Commander James A. LaCoursiere Jr., an Air Force veteran from Connecticut, speaks at the Fagan Fighters World War II Museum, hosted by Granite Falls Post 69. Behind him is a painting of the Normandy Invasion. WCCO came all the way to Granite Falls to cover him.

Affairs, Minnesota National Guard and Minneapolis VA Medical Center. He spoke with the soldiers of the 224th Transportation Company in Faribault and made a pitstop at Traxler's Hunting Preserve in Le Center.

### Second chances

In Pine Island, LaCoursiere told the story of his second chance. He encouraged all Legionnaires to give second chances to each other.

Continued on Page 7



The national commander speaks to a crowd of 150 hosted by La Crescent Post 595 at the La Crescent Area Event Center.

## 'Be the One' mobile app part of MDVA suicide prevention

MINNEAPOLIS — The American Legion, in February, rolled out its "Be the One" mobile app aimed at assisting veterans in crisis in an effort to reduce suicides.

Now, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs plans to join The American Legion in encouraging veterans, their families, post staff such as bartenders and pulltab sellers and anyone

remotely connected to their veterans community to download the "Be the One" app.

The app, developed by Columbia University's Lighthouse Project and tailored to The American Legion's "Be the One" veteran-suicide-prevention mission, is available via both Apple and Google. The app

Continued on Page 8



Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Community-Based Services Director Rachel Johnson, left, and Suicide Prevention Coordinator Kristi Stites hold up their cellphones showing the Be the One app. The MDVA wants veterans to have the app on their phones.

## NEC seats to shuffle

Barbknecht, Moon are not running for re-election

CHANHASSEN — National Executive Committee member Bill Barbknecht of Fergus Falls Post 30 has been in his red-cap role since 2019, traveling back and forth to the top floor of the American Legion Headquarters in Indianapolis for NEC meetings.

"It's time to go home and do things there," he told the Department Executive Committee at Chanhassen Post 580 on March 8. "I'm not here to pick a successor."

Barbknecht, out of the 9th District, has had to deal with a succession of health issues, which has limited his ability to travel and exhausts him when he decides to go.

Department Commander Carl Moon has announced his intention to run for NECman at the department convention

Continued on Page 10



Bill Barbknecht



Peggy Moon



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Family is always welcome at the Department Convention. Kids aren't charged registration fees.

## Sign up today for the Department Convention

WILLMAR — Registration is open for the 106th American Legion Department of Minnesota Convention.

To sign up with a check, use the form to the right.

To sign up online, go to the Events part of the department website, [mnlegion.org](http://mnlegion.org). Online registration is through Eventbrite.

The convention is when the business of The American Legion gets done. New department officers are elected. Committee chairs give their reports on what they accomplished in the past year. Resolutions are voted upon and sent up the chain to the National Convention.

The event is also a time for sharing ideas. Membership directors learn membership tips. Gambling managers hear from Gambling Control Board staff. New district commanders learn from old district commanders. Camaraderie and mutual helpfulness are on display, with great entertainment at Willmar

Post 167. A shuttle service to the hotels is planned out, too.

"If you have never been to a department convention, go. You will encounter new friends that you will enjoy seeing as old friends when you attend a second, third, even fourth convention down the road," said Commander Carl Moon. "And your post will be better off for having sent you to the convention."

Register before June 26 to take advantage of the best price. The fee rises to \$30 after June 26.

Lodging is available at the following hotels. Be sure to ask for the "American Legion block":

Best Western Plus: 320-235-6060  
Holiday Inn Express: 320-231-2601  
Country Inn & Suites: 320-214-0300  
AmericInn: 320-365-1995


The Days Inn doesn't have the "American Legion block," but it is only about three city blocks away: 320-403-2334

There are other lodging options available in the Willmar area but are farther from the convention hall. They can be found with a simple Google Maps search.

The Explore Willmar Lakes Area agency encourages members and their family to enjoy the golfing, fishing, boating, shopping, dining, cycling and hiking in the area. Visit [willmarlakesarea.com](http://willmarlakesarea.com) to find things to do.

A convention schedule will be published in the June issue of The Minnesota Legionnaire.

Also, look for a sample ballot of candidates in the June issue. See you in Willmar.



# 2025 Dept. Convention Official Registration

**Convention dates and location:**  
July 10-12, 2025, Willmar Conference Center  
Various committees meet July 9

**Make check out to:**  
American Legion Post 167

**Write on memo line:**  
Dept. Convention

**Mail to:**  
Carrie Werner  
36898 County Hwy. 6  
Redwood Falls, MN 56238

**Registration fees:**  
Registration received by mail by June 26: \$20  
Registration received by mail after June 26: \$30  
Registration over Eventbrite by June 26: \$20 + service fee  
Registration received over Eventbrite after June 26: \$30 + service fee  
Registration at the door: \$30  
(+ service fee if using a card at the door; cards not accepted at the door after noon Friday, July 11)

Register before June 26 to receive a booklet.

Registration fees are for each person attending, whether a delegate, alternate or a guest. Please copy and send a separate form for each person attending. A single check is fine. Junior SAL and Junior Auxiliary are not charged a fee but must send a form.

**About you:**

Check one: Legion Auxiliary SAL

Enter numbers: District Post/Unit/Squadron

Check one: Delegate Alternate Guest

(Auxiliary only) Delegate at-large: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Choose Past Dept. President or Dept. Exec. Cmte.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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- Circa 21 Dinner Theater "Chicago"
- John Deere Wiman Home Tour
- Quad City Botanical Center
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- Field of Dreams Movie Site
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### National Parks

September 8-18, 2025

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- 10 Nights accommodations
- 16 Meals: 10 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 5 dinners
- Luggage handling (1 per person)
- Durango/Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad
- Admissions to: Badlands, Mount Rushmore, Painted Desert & Petrified Forest, Grand Canyon, Zion National Park and Bryce Canyon

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September 26-October 2, 2025

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- Accompanied by a 4 Seasons Tour Director
- Deluxe Motorcoach Transportation
- 7 nights accommodations
- 15 Meals: 7 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 6 dinners
- City Tour of Nashville, Music City USA
- Ryman Auditorium
- Grand Ole Opry
- Country Tonight Theater Show
- Patty Waszak Morning Variety Show
- Dolly Parton's Stampede
- Tour of Smoky Mountains National Park
- Tour and Tasting at Ole Smoky Moonshine
- Titanic Pigeon Forge Museum
- Array Variety Show

**\$2,199.00 pp Double Occupancy**



### Ark Encounter

October 20-25, 2025

**Included in your tour:**

- Accompanied by a 4 Seasons Tour Director
- Deluxe Motorcoach Transportation
- 5 Nights accommodations
- 11 Meals
- Luggage handling (1 per person)
- Ark Encounter and Creation Museum
- Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption
- National Underground Railroad Freedom Center
- Patriot's Landing
- B&B Riverboat Dinner Cruise
- Circa 21 Dinner Theater "Come from Away"

**\$1,399.00 pp Double Occupancy**



### Biltmore & Nashville at Christmastime

November 13-20, 2025

**Included in your tour:**

- Accompanied by a 4 Seasons Tour Director
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- 14 Meals: 7 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 6 dinners
- Luggage handling (1 per person)
- Nashville Jubilee Country & Comedy Show
- Tour of Asheville

- Antler Hill Village and Winery
- Candlelight Christmas tour of Biltmore House
- General Jackson Showboat
- RCA Studio B
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**2025 MAY 2-4**  
Camp Shetek near Slayton, MN

**2025 JUNE 6-8**  
Osprey Wilds near Sandstone, MN

**2025 OCTOBER 3-5**  
Good Earth Village - Spring Valley, MN

**2025 DECEMBER 5-7**  
Faith Haven Camp near Battle Lake, MN



**Idea:**  
Place a sign at your gambling booth that says: "Send a kid between ages 9-13 to Legionville summer camp for free!"

Below, provide the name and number of the member at your post who coordinates campers.



# Endorsements

## Moon endorsed for NECman from Minnesota

Dr. Carl Moon has been endorsed for National Executive Committeeman from Minnesota for the 2025-2027 years by Kriesel Jacobson Post 560 in Zimmerman. He also has been endorsed by the 6th District.

In 1972, Moon was awarded the Armed Forces Health Professions Scholarship, through the U.S. Air Force, to attend Southern College of Optometry, in Memphis, Tenn.

Moon served in the Air Force 1976-1984.

He is a Paid-Up-For Life American Legion member with 37 years of continuous

membership. He served as post commander for two terms.

On the 6th District level he served as district commander, vice commander, Sherburne County Council commander, district chaplain, and most recently as district membership director.

On the Department of Minnesota level, he served as Employment Committee chairman for five years, chairman of Finance Committee 2022-2023, and is currently the president of Legionville. He is currently serving as department commander for the 2024-25 membership

year and also as the chairman of the Minnesota Commanders' Task Force.

On the national level, he is the national commander's representative to the VA&R Commission and is one of only six Legion members appointed to the Veteran Well-being Committee for TBI/PTSD and suicide prevention. He is a member of ANAVICUS, Sons of the American Legion Squadron 560, 40&8 Voiture 414, and has



Carl Moon

a life membership in the DAV. Moon is also a proud member of the Auxiliary Unit 560.

Moon was employed at the St. Cloud VA as an optometrist for 20 years and retired in 2020. Carl and his wife, Peggy (Air Force veteran and past district and department commander and currently Alternate NECman) have been married 50 years, have two daughters, two grandsons, and four grandchildren.



## James Mead backed for department chaplain

Earl C. Hill Post 550 in Bloomington has endorsed James W. Mead for Department of Minnesota chaplain in 2025-26.

Mead is a two-time Chaplain of the Year for the 10th District. He has been an American Legion member for 48 years. He is a past vice commander and past Americanism chairman for the 10th District.

He served as Post 550 adjutant 2001-04 and commander 2004-06. He is presently in his eighth year as post chaplain. He has participated in the

Bloomington Honor Guard for more than 30 years. He has served as commander and membership director of Squadron 550 for six years. He also is a member of 40&8 Voiture 1281.

Mead served two years in the Army, with basic at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and AIT at Fort Rucker, Ala. The Army stationed him at Fort Rucker, too, serving as a helicopter mechanic crew chief with the Army Aviation Board's testing facility. (Today, it's called the Aviation Technical Test

Center.)

Most of the testing was at Fort Rucker, but he and his team left the base to perform testing at Fort Carson, Colo., and at Holloman AFB, N.M. He was fortunate to be part of a project for testing the Bell 214A helicopter, which are similar to Huey's but can hold four additional soldiers.

After the service, Mead used his G.I. Bill benefit to



James Mead

get a degree from the Minnesota School of Business. He worked five years in restaurant management, then 24 years with the U.S. Postal Service.

He is involved in several local civic organizations.

He attends Nativity of Mary Catholic Church in Bloomington.

He and his wife, Caroline, have two sons and six grandchildren.

## THE AMERICAN LEGION Department of Minn. Commander's Project

Department Commander Carl Moon's Project raises money for the Veterans Defense Project.

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.**

Fund 82 is the fund for the Commander's Project. The foundation is a 501(c)3. Gambling funds are permitted.

The Veterans Defense Project defends veterans and aims to expand veterans courts across the state and nation.

Date of graphic: April 15

Goal:  
\$60,000

Thanks to posts 21, 64, 143, 165, 177, Unit 102 and Chapter 560. Thanks to several individual donors, too.

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# Minnesota impresses nat’l commander

We just finished our week’s tour with our National Commander James LaCoursiere Jr. I want to first thank all of the posts who hosted our visits. What a great job! I especially want to thank all who turned out at each event. The national commander had a great and personal message for the “Be the One” program and was very impressed with the great turnout at each stop. He commented on how well-organized and comfortable he felt with Minnesota’s tour schedule.

My compliments to Adjutant Mike Maxa, Communications Director Tim Engstrom and Membership Director Carla Tappainer for all their hard work. The commander stressed that he was hoping that Minnesota could achieve a 100 percent CPR turn-in. On that note, Sylvan Fix from the Americanism Committee will spearhead that effort. You can contact him with any questions 507-313-3376 or via email at papafixone@gmail.com. Please remember that every Legion member has 25 cents taken out of their dues for the Hospital Association program

## Commander’s Column

Carl Moon



and this qualifies as an entry on the CPR form. So there should be no CPR reports with a “zero” entry. As president of Legionville, we are looking for a great turnout at this year’s School Safety Camp. This year, there will be six weekly sessions beginning June 15 with the last session starting on July 27. Other events at Legionville are: Work & Play weekend May 15-18, Junior Fun Weekend Aug 8-10, Camporee Sept 4-7. We would love to have more districts attending this fun event, so please contact Jody Hassing for more information, ALR Romp Sept 11-14, new SAL Turkey Hunt Sept 28-30, and the John Zgoda Deer Hunt Oct 3-5. Our camp projects this year are new flooring for the dorms and sewer upgrade/replacement for all dorms and cabins. Any and all donations are greatly appreciated. The Indy Spring Meetings will be May 4-6, and though

I have no official duties I will be Peggy’s chauffeur and escort. (Peggy Moon is the alternate NECman.) My project is the Veterans Defense Project. Fundraising is coming along and as of this publication you have helped raise \$41,082 toward my goal of \$60,000. My sincere thank you to all who have donated. I want to thank all who were able to attend my testimonial dinner on April 5 in Walker. I hope everyone had a great time, and I very much appreciate everyone for taking time out of their busy schedules to help Peggy and I to celebrate my year as your commander.

*Carl Moon of Zimmerman Post 560 is the commander of The American Legion Department of Minnesota. His theme is “ACT: Accountability, Communication and Transparency.”*

*Opinions expressed in Mail Call are that of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of The Minnesota Legionnaire or The American Legion.*

## Mail Call

### It’s been honor to serve Minn.

First of all, I would like to say “thank you” for all of the many cards, gifts, blankets, flowers and prayers given to me over the past nine months. They must have worked because I’m getting stronger each day. You have all truly made a difference in my recovery, and I am very thankful for my American Legion Family. Unfortunately, it’s going to take a while to get my stamina back, and I have come to the realization that I need to take some time to concentrate on my health. For this reason, I have decided to not run for another term as your Alternate National Executive Committeeman. I have enjoyed the last six years, and it has been an honor to serve the Department of Minnesota in this capacity. Good luck to the next team!

**Peggy Moon**  
Alternate NECman  
Zimmerman Post 560

## That building is more than just a building

*Editor’s note: This letter originally was published as a guest column in the Brainerd Dispatch.* The American Legion was founded in 1919 and was recognized by Congress that year with a national charter. The organization was created to advocate for veterans of World War I. Over the years, the Legion has continued to grow and has supported hundreds of thousands of veterans. Among its many achievements, the Legion was instrumental in the creation of the G.I. Bill

and the U.S. Veterans Bureau, which later became the Veterans Administration. The Legion’s mission is, “To enhance the well-being of America’s veterans, their families, our military and our community by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.” Today, the Legion has four pillars that represent their service and advocacy missions: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism and Children & Youth. These pillars guide the organization in the creation and support of programs they operate. Under the pillar of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, the Legion has supported efforts to help homeless veterans, eliminating the claims backlog at the VA and supporting training for veterans to establish new careers after military service. Under the pillar of National Security, the Legion supports bringing home POW/MIAs and ensuring we have a ready military force supported by the nation. Under the pillar of Americanism, the Legion supports voter education, Boys State, Legion Baseball and Scouting, as well as Pledge of Allegiance education for children. Under the pillar of Children & Youth, the Legion has sought to live up to the selfless service established by its founders back in 1919, when they thought of the thousands of children left behind by those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their actions in WWI. The Legion has raised and donated millions of dollars to support sick or in-need children, created numerous scholarships, and supported families struggling with the loss of a service-member. They also advocate on behalf of those fighting against social ills such as child pornography, teen suicide, drug abuse and violence in the home. The Legion is much more

than that building downtown. The American Legion is made up of men and women who served their country and are looking for ways to support their fellow veterans and their communities. The American Legion is supporting young people throughout the Brainerd Lakes area through numerous programs including Scouting, cheerleading, 4-H, Boys and Girls State leadership programs, and school programs. The Legion supports these programs by chartering units, providing leaders and financial support to keep these programs available for youth. The Legion is working to support veterans in need throughout the lakes area through its support of homeless veterans initiatives, support for other organizations such as Salvation Army, Soup Kitchen, local food banks and support for those seeking care through the VA medical centers. The American Legion cannot, however, continue to provide support to these programs and the numerous others without support from our local community! While the Legion is not just the building downtown in several of our local communities, so much of what the Legion does starts there. Without patrons visiting the building and enjoying refreshments or taking part in charitable gaming, the Legion cannot afford to support these worthy programs. Without veterans joining the ranks of The American Legion, our level of influence over lawmakers becomes diminished. Therefore, if you’re a veteran, we welcome you to come to an American Legion post and join our organization and get involved in the activities of the organization that has provided you some of the great benefits that support veterans. If you’re not a veteran we still want you to stop in at the post

# Morality and belief can’t be legislated

A command sergeant major I worked for during my Army active-duty time in the 1980s commented how confused he was over religious and faith expression. As a military leader during his tour in Vietnam, he would have to discipline pagans if caught practicing solstice events. As a practicing Baptist (yes, that is my faith, our history is ripe with drownings, torture and being killed for our faith in Europe), I am aware of cultural and legal acceptance of practicing a faith not in the majority. Twenty years later military chaplains then provided accommodations for a “controlled burn” to occur during solstices. Americans have always believed in a variety of different faiths and spiritual practices. Catholic, Wiccan, Hindu, Protestant, NONEs or no religion, Native American, Shinto and Jewish, to name a few. In the 21st century, data is gathered, documented and shared of who believes what of different spiritual/faith practices. Pew Research’s Religious

## Chaplain’s Corner

Kelley Ackerman



*Landscape Study of 2023-24* (www.pewresearch.org) indicates that the “religiously unaffiliated” now comprise 29 percent (2007 was 16 percent) of U.S. adults compared to Christians at 62 percent. One group of the religiously unaffiliated, the atheists, who adhere to a humanistic philosophy has been increasing. There are even atheist churches now. Another place atheists gather for spiritual development and community is in Unitarian Universalist Churches. Paganism (think Valhalla) and witchcraft are now accepted in culture today. Satanism is another belief practice. This past holiday season, the Satanists of Minnesota had an approved plaque through the Minnesota Department of Administration (which runs the Capitol Complex buildings) on display Capitol Rotunda. Our First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution “prevents

Congress from making laws respecting an establishment of religion; prohibiting the free exercise of religion; or abridging the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press, the freedom of assembly, or the right to petition the government for redress of grievances.” Morality and belief cannot be legislated. We live in a country where people are not legally prosecuted for their beliefs and practice in a faith or religion. Our country’s founders recognized that legislating a faith expression for all violates the human conscience of autonomy. Amen to this. *Kelley Ackerman of Pine Island Post 184 is the chaplain for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.*

and enjoy some refreshments or take part in some of our public events that support our communities. Our posts offer great dining experiences and also can provide a wonderful venue for a large gathering, such as a wedding reception or family reunion.

**Kenneth Toole**  
Iraq War Army veteran  
Nisswa Post 627

## Happy 103rd birthday!

March 12, 2025, was wounded Marine Lupe Gasca’s 103rd birthday. Lupe lives by himself and is doing well. All his American Legion buddies at Post 56 wish him well.

**John McGaughey**  
Albert Lea Post 56

## Legion Baseball celebrates its 100th season

I wanted to share with the readers what National American Legion HQ put on its website about Minnesota American Legion Baseball: Facts about the history of American Legion Baseball in the Department of Minnesota. NOTE: As we prepare to celebrate American Legion Baseball’s centennial season, we’re taking a quick look at historical facts from each Legion department which sponsors, or has sponsored, the program. Three of Minnesota’s four Legion Baseball alumni in the Baseball Hall of Fame played for teams sponsored by the same post — albeit at different times. Dave Winfield, Paul Molitor and Joe Mauer all played for Post 606 in St. Paul. The fourth Hall of Famer, Jack Morris, played for Post 406 in St. Paul.

Facts about Minnesota Legion Baseball  
First season of American Legion Baseball: 1926.  
First state champion: Crosby Post 154.  
Baseball Hall of Famers (4): Dave Winfield, St. Paul, 2001 (1977 Graduate of the Year); Paul Molitor, St. Paul, 2004 (1996 Graduate of the Year); Jack Morris, St. Paul, 2018; Joe Mauer, St. Paul, 2024.  
Other notable alumni:

Michael Halloran, Edina, 1983 Player of the Year; Blake Schmit, Eden Prairie, 2011 Player of the Year; Terry Steinbach, New Ulm, 1992 Graduate of the Year.  
American Legion World Series titles (5): Richfield Post 435, 1943; Edina Post 471, 1983; New Brighton Post 513, 1999; Rochester Post 92, 2003; Eden Prairie, 2011.  
Other American Legion  
**Continued on Page 6**

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# Taps



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

Name of Deceased	Age	Date of Death	Branch	Era	Cont. Years	Post
Aalderks, Larry A.	80	3/14/25	Army	Vietnam	26	Hutchinson Post 96
Note: He served 30 years in the Army National Guard.						
Amundson, Donald A.	82	1/23/24	Army	Vietnam	40	Bagley Post 16
Anderson, Darrell O.	79	3/19/25	Marines	Vietnam	42	Montevideo Post 59
Aske, Wesley R.	79	3/16/25	Army	Vietnam	12	Albert Lea Post 56
Barthel, Gerald E. "Jerry"	93	3/11/25	Navy	Korea	68	Monticello Post 260
Note: He is a past member of the Red Coat Installation Squadron.						
Berglin, William	90	2/26/25	Navy	Korea	69	Kettle River Post 360
Note: He served three years aboard the attack transport USS Magoffin going to Korea, Hong Kong and Japan, with home port in San Diego. He was a charter member of the post.						
Bodmer, George F.	93	2/5/25	Army	Korea	49	Business & Professional Post 450
Borchert, Owen W.	100	unk.	Army	WWII	49	Anoka Post 102
Boyer, Dale G.	88	3/2/25	Army	Korea	4	Round Lake Post 461
Bridges, Jack L.	86	2/14/25	Army	Vietnam	5	Lake City Post 110
Buckley, Fabian J.	86	2/6/25	Army	Vietnam	21	Fairmont Post 36
Casey, Timothy D.	72	3/21/25	Air Force	Vietnam	47	Anoka Post 102
Condon, Thomas J.	82	2/27/25	Army	Vietnam	26	Clara City Post 485
Czech, Louis J.	90	2/28/25	Army	Vietnam	17	Little Falls Post 46
Decker, Richard M.	95	1/2/25	Army	Korea	58	Cold Spring Post 455
Defrang, James D.	80	1/2/25	Army	Vietnam	41	Zumbrota Post 183
Deutsch, Duane J.	73	3/24/25	Army	Vietnam	18	Jordan Post 3
Ditterick, Norbert G.	82	2/2/25	Army	Vietnam	51	Detroit Lakes Post 15
Dvorak, Victor F.	93	2/11/25	Navy	Korea	67	Hayfield Post 330
Note: He served as a machinist's mate on the heavy cruiser USS Bremerton. His ship went to Korea during the war, firing its guns and rescuing pilots, as well as Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines and Hawaii.						
Dye, Joel T.	89	3/25/25	Navy	Korea	1	Anoka Post 102
Eggert, Arnold O.	95	4/7/25	Army	Korea	42	Milaca Post 178
Frank, Dennis	76	4/3/25	Navy/Army	Vietnam	50	Little Falls Post 46
Note: He served four years in the Navy, followed by 24 years in the Army National Guard. He served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Oriskany, including two cruises to the Gulf of Tonkin during the war.						
Froehle, Joseph H.	85	7/24/24	Army	Vietnam	12	Cold Spring Post 455
Germerscheid, Brian A.	68	2/8/25	Air Force	Cold	4	Le Center Post 108
Gran, Ardell S. "Art"	82	1/17/25	Army	Cold	59	La Crescent Post 595
Note: He carried the American flag for numerous parades and burials. He is a past post commander.						
Hanson, Bonnie L.	80	3/21/25	Marines	Vietnam	44	Buffalo Post 270
Note: She served at Camp Pendleton, Calif. She was the 10th District commander 2016-17, district adjutant 2014-15 and department chaplain 2018-19. She was currently the chairman of the district NS/FR and Employment committees.						
Hanson, David H.	90	2/28/25	Army	Korea	33	Dodge Center Post 384
Note: He served on the honor guard for many years. He was past Dodge County commissioner.						
Havel, John E.	80	3/16/25	Army	Vietnam	52	Pine City Post 51
Note: He served with the 52nd Artillery Group in Germany.						
Hedman, Gordon A.	99	1/20/25	Army	WWII	35	Storden Post 391
Hertzog, Thomas R.	71	1/30/25	Army	Vietnam	18	Millerville Post 527
Note: He was the standing finance officer for the post. He served in the 101st Airborne Division.						
Heuer, Thomas W.	88	3/28/25	Army	Vietnam	16	Mora Post 201
Hildebrandt, Donald O.	93	3/11/25	Army	Korea	67	St. Peter Post 37
Note: He was a past post commander.						
Holstad, Harold M.	89	1/17/25	Army	Korea	24	Albert Lea Post 56
Holty, Harold E.	85	2/1/25	Air Force	Cold	4	Albert Lea Post 56
Note: He was stationed in Morocco.						
Irwin, Frank A.	89	2/22/25	Army	Korea/VN	60	Mazeppa Post 588
Note: He was a past post commander and adjutant and spent many years on the honor guard. He served in the military for 21 years, retiring as a chief warrant officer 2.						
Jenson, Dennis J.	68	3/9/25	Navy	Panama	25	Milaca Post 178
Note: He was a civilian living in Milaca at the time of the Panama Invasion in 1989. However, he was a Vietnam-era veteran with a sense of humor when he joined the Legion in 2001 and marked "Panama." (We get you, Denny.)						
Jibben, Arlin E.	89	3/28/25	Army	Vietnam	46	Montevideo Post 59
Johnson, James E.	88	unk.	Coast Guard	WWII	24	Bloomington Post 550
Kalthoff, Clement J.	90	3/8/25	Army	Korea	67	Paynesville Post 271
Note: He served on the honor guard.						
Kelleher, Michael F.	89	8/2/24	Army	Korea	16	Burnsville Post 1700
Ketola, John A.	80	3/12/25	Navy	Vietnam	48	Cloquet Post 262
Note: He retired from the military after 22 years. Later, he retired from a second career with the U.S. Postal Service.						
Kirk, Gordon W.	102	3/2/25	Army	WWII	61	Bloomington Viking Post 493
Note: He transported body bags at Omaha Beach six days after D-Day. He served in a trucking company under Gen. George Patton during the Battle of the Bulge, suffering frostbite to his hands. He joined Allied forces liberating the Nazi concentration camp in Dachau. He held DDT sprayers to kill lice on enslaved Czech and Polish laborers. The governor declared his 100th birthday in 2023 to be Gordy Kirk Day.						
Klinzing, Richard R.	81	1/3/25	Navy	Vietnam	41	Babbitt Post 535
Note: He was a past post commander.						
Krenik, Francis A. "Chico"	87	3/31/25	Army	Vietnam	6	Northfield Post 84
Kurtzbein, Robert D.	75	2/1/25	Army	Vietnam	51	Montevideo Post 59
Larson, Gene L.	95	3/19/25	Army	Korea	11	Montevideo Post 59
Leyendecker, Raymond M.	96	3/9/25	Army	Korea	50	Waite Park Post 428
Lonneman, Anthony J.	93	2/8/25	Army	Korea	47	Adrian Post 32
Lutz, Wallace H. "Wally"	94	2/17/25	Army	Korea	14	Montevideo Post 59
Note: He joined the National Guard and ended up serving in the war.						
Marcus, Donald L.	88	3/9/25	Army	Cold	18	Raymond Post 420.
Maroo, Paul A.	74	2/15/25	Navy	Vietnam	36	Dodge Center Post 384
Note: He served aboard surface ships and submarines. He was a past post commander and member of the honor guard.						
Marthaler, Melvin "Mel"	93	2/20/25	Army	Korea	10	Cold Spring Post 455
Note: He was stationed at Fort Lewis, Wash.						
Mattsen, Robert D.	70	8/20/24	Navy	Vietnam	6	St. Francis Post 622
McCarthy, George B.	94	3/5/25	Army	Korea	43	Albert Lea Post 56
Mentjes, Ronald D.	82	3/11/25	Army	Vietnam	41	Le Center Post 108
Montague, Charles T.	87	12/28/24	Navy	Vietnam	27	Little Falls Post 46
Note: Known as "Crazy Charlie," he served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Lake Champlain.						
Monzon, Anthony	73	unk.	Air Force	Vietnam	3	Anoka Post 102
Moore, Joseph J.	92	3/9/25	unk.	Korea	16	Rush City Post 93
Mueller, Donald H.	89	3/20/25	Navy	Korea	31	Milaca Post 178
Munson, Dennis D.	91	3/9/25	Air Force	Korea	14	Lake Park Post 181
Myers, Ronald H.	80	2/25/25	Army	Vietnam	19	St. Peter Post 37
Nelson, David E.	88	3/12/25	Navy	Korea	28	Rochester Post 92



Bonnie Hanson

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Continued on Page 6



# All-Family Events Calendar

**May 5-9:** Spring Meetings, Indianapolis  
**May 14:** 100 percent membership target date  
**May 15-18:** Work & Play Weekend, Legionville  
**May 17:** Dept. President's Testimonial, Fairmont  
**May 17:** 1st District Convention, Lake City Wild Wings  
**May 17:** 3rd District Convention, Forest Lake Post 225  
**May 17:** 4th District Convention, N. St. Paul Post 39  
**May 17:** 7th District Convention, Echo Post 204  
**May 17-18:** American Legion National Oratorical Contest, Hillsdale College, Mich.  
**May 26:** Memorial Day, local ceremonies  
**June 7:** 2nd District Convention, Pipestone Post 6  
**June 7:** 5th District Convention, Holiday Inn/Green Mill (I-35W & 94th), Bloomington  
**June 7:** 8th District Convention, Taconite Post 301  
**June 7:** 6th District Convention, Brainerd Post 255  
**June 7:** 10th District Convention, Buffalo Post 270  
**June 7:** 9th District Convention, E. Grand Forks Post 157  
**June 8-14:** Minnesota Boys State, St. John's Univ.  
**June 15-21:** Minnesota Girls State, Bethel University  
**June 15-Aug. 1:** Six weeklong sessions of youth camping at Legionville  
**June 25:** American Legion Day at Target Field, Minnesota Twins vs. Seattle Mariners, Minneapolis  
**June 27-28:** SAL Detachment of Minnesota Convention, Morris Post 29  
**July 4:** Independence Day, local ceremonies  
**July 9:** Minnesota American Legion & Auxiliary Department Executive Committee Meetings, Willmar  
**July 10-12:** 106th Department Convention, Willmar  
**July 12:** Department Executive Committee, Willmar  
**July 18-25:** Boys Nation, Marymount Univ., Va.  
**July 19-26:** Girls Nation, Bolger Center, Potomac, Md.  
**July 24-27:** Fund 85 Ride, location in N. Minn. TBD  
**July 28-31:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I-A State Tournament, Burnsville (dates tentative)  
**July 31-Aug. 3:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I State Tournament, St. Michael  
**Aug. 1:** Final session of Legionville ends  
**Aug. 1-3:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Jr. State Tournament, Bloomington  
**Aug. 1-3:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. II State Tournament, Ely  
**Aug. 2-3:** Minnesota American Legion Fastpitch Softball State Tournament, Fairmont  
**Aug. 8-10:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. II Jr. State Tournament, Hayfield  
**Aug. 6-10:** AL Baseball Central Plains Regional, Fargo  
**Aug. 14-17:** American Legion World Series, Shelby, N.C.  
**Aug. 8-10:** Auxiliary Junior Fun Weekend, Legionville  
**Aug. 16:** Minnesota Legacy Run, location TBD  
**Aug. 18-22:** National Legacy Run, ending at national convention in Tampa  
**Aug. 22-28:** 106th National Convention, Tampa, Fla.  
**Sept. 1:** Registration opens for Junior Shooting Sports  
**Sept. 4-7:** Camporee, Legionville  
**Sept. 11-14:** Minnesota ALR Romp, Legionville  
**Sept. 15:** Sons of The American Legion Birthday  
**Sept. 28-30:** SAL Disabled Veterans Turkey Hunt, Legionville  
**Oct. 3-5:** John Zgoda Disabled Veterans Deer Hunt, Legionville  
**Oct. 6:** Fall Meetings, Indianapolis

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## Taps Continued from Page 5

Note: He had a special, beloved seat at the Post 92 bar, and a signature drink, Miller Genuine Draft. He was stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, later went to Formosa (now Taiwan), Okinawa, Japan, and Bremerton, Wash.							
<b>Nelson, Rolland R.</b>	80	2/23/25	Army	Vietnam	17	Little Falls Post 46	
<b>Osterman, Lynn L.</b>	84	3/15/25	Army	Vietnam	36	Mora Post 201	
Note: He was a 30-year member of the Minnesota State Patrol.							
<b>Parker, F. Patrick</b>	79	12/29/24	Air Force	Vietnam	23	Burnsville Post 1700	
<b>Petermeier, Thomas H.</b>	86	3/20/25	Marines	Vietnam	14	Millerville Post 527	
<b>Ramsdell, Gerald G.</b>	93	3/2/25	Army	Korea	6	Chanhassen Post 580	
<b>Rickers, Russell M.</b>	93	3/30/25	Army	Korea	72	Worthington Post 5	
<b>Sankey, Moreau J.</b>	78	3/2/24	Navy/Army	VN-Gulf	12	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435	
Note: He served six years in the Navy, then 22 in the Army, retiring at E-8. He was active with the Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel Foundation.							
<b>Savage, Gary P.</b>	74	2/27/25	Air Force	Vietnam	22	Shakopee Post 2	
Note: He served with the 29th Tactical Airlift Squadron at Clark Air Base in the Philippines and flew C-130B aircrafts to Vietnam during the war.							
<b>Savoy, Bruce H.</b>	75	3/10/25	N/Mar.	Vietnam	48	New Ulm Post 132	
Note: After becoming a hospital corpsman in 1968, his orders assigned him to the Great Lakes Naval Base Hospital in the neurosurgery ward, taking care of veterans returning home from Vietnam as paraplegics, quadriplegics, and with traumatic brain injuries. In 1969, he was transferred to the Marine Corps 3rd Division in California as part of the Field Med School. He served in the Navy and Marines in Hawaii and Okinawa. He then joined 1,200 fellow Marines aboard the USS Vancouver, serving in military operations in Taiwan, Japan, Philippines, Hong Kong and Vietnam.							
<b>Scharberg, Arlan M.</b>	90	2/16/25	Army	Korea	58	Hayfield Post 330	
Note: He was a past post commander, vice commander and chaplain. He served in Korea during the Korean War.							
<b>Schindele, Kenneth B.</b>	76	11/16/24	Army	Vietnam	17	Cold Spring Post 455	
Note: He completed a tour in Germany and a tour in Vietnam.							
<b>Smith, Andrew J.</b>	91	3/11/25	Army	Korea	23	Pipestone Post 6	
<b>Stillwell, Douglas</b>	98	3/30/25	Navy	WWII	18	Elk River Post 112	
<b>Stohlberg, Marvin H.</b>	78	3/31/25	Army	Vietnam	54	Cloquet Post 262	
<b>Sullivan, James P. "Sully"</b>	82	12/17/24	Air Force	Vietnam	25	Rush City Post 93	
<b>Swanson, Ronald B.</b>	74	1/2/25	Army	Vietnam	37	Walker Post 134	
Note: He was drafted and stationed with the 3rd Infantry Division in Germany as a paralegal and clerk.							
<b>Tidd, Mark S.</b>	77	3/23/25	Marines	Vietnam	31	Walker Post 134	
<b>Tiede, Robert O.</b>	95	12/22	Army	Korea	13	Waseca Post 228	
Note: He was drafted and stationed in Nuremburg, Germany.							
<b>Tongen, Richard</b>	83	2/14/25	Army	Vietnam	49	Montevideo Post 59	
Note: He served aboard the command ship USS Estes.							
<b>Trebil, Gary L.</b>	79	3/30/25	Army	Vietnam	46	Albert Lea Post 56	
<b>Udenberg, Greg A.</b>	64	3/1/25	Navy	Cold	1	Two Harbors Post 109	
<b>Van Binsbergen, Warren J.</b>	92	2/13/25	Army	Korea	37	Montevideo Post 59	
<b>Waldron, Lyle A.</b>	76	3/15/25	Army	Vietnam	34	Waseca Post 228	
<b>Warneke, Thomas C. Sr.</b>	100	1/13/25	Navy	WWII	62	Stacy Post 312	
<b>Warner, Gerald T.</b>	84	3/31/25	Army	Vietnam	13	Elk River Post 112	
<b>Webster, Terrance J.</b>	68	1/20/25	Army	Leb/Gren	1	Milaca Post 178	
<b>Wieggers, Stan D.</b>	81	3/10/25	Navy	Vietnam	41	Austin Post 91	
<b>Zimmerman, William C.</b>	87	1/31/25	Navy	Korea	40	Cold Spring Post 455	
Note: He was stationed in Alaska.							

## Mail Call Continued from Page 4

World Series appearances (16): Bloomington, 1999; Burnsville, 2013; Eden Prairie, 2004, 2007, 2010; Edina, 1982; Excelsior, 1998, 2002; Moorhead, 1988; New Brighton, 1997; New Ulm, 1978, 1985; Osseo, 1993, 1995; Richfield, 1973; Woodbury, 2005.

National did this for for every state. Thanks for reading about Minnesota, the largest Legion Baseball program in the country.

Joe Bares  
Jordan Post 3

## USS Saint Paul crew seeks a memorial

The USS Saint Paul Association has initiated a fundraising campaign to establish a commemorative memorial in the state of Minnesota to honor the ship and the men

who served on her. The association is currently in the application process with the Capital Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB) and hopes to achieve final approval for the project at the end of 2025.

The USS Saint Paul Association is sending letters to the post commanders of all Minnesota American Legion posts providing information on the fundraising campaign and requesting financial and letter support for the USS Saint Paul Commemorative Memorial. The process of memorializing the USS Saint Paul involves a period of public review of the proposal. We hope that American Legion members will join the (1,200 active association members) in encouraging state authorities to move forward with this memorial.

The USS Saint Paul was a storied ship earning 18 battle stars and firing the last rounds on the home islands of Japan ending World War II. She also fired the final rounds of the Korean War on July 27, 1953, and engaged in a record five deployments in

the Vietnam War. She holds the record for the most ordnance rounds (182,000) fired in combat fired by any naval vessel in the world.

From the time of the ship's christening in 1944 by the mayor's wife through its decommissioning in 1971 with a native Minnesotan as commanding officer, there has been a continuum of veterans (several hundred being from Minnesota including three commanding officers) who proudly represented the city of Saint Paul and the great state of Minnesota.

Post commanders are encouraged to review the information being sent by the USS Saint Paul Association Inc. and consider a donation to support the project. The USS Saint Paul Association is a 501(c)(19) nonprofit organization.

John Franz  
vice president  
USS Saint Paul Association

## Epilogue to Mora post story

MORA — A story in the March 2025 issue detailed how Mora American Legion Post 201 was being forced to pay \$7,000 in commercial property taxes even though it has no bar or banquet business. It is a veterans memorial next to a building with military depictions, existing solely on donations.

The story said Kanabec County Assessor Tina Von Eschen did not return calls from the Legionnaire inquiring why the post wasn't being taxed at 1 percent. Members of the post had told the Legionnaire the assessor granted a 1 percent reduction instead.

Von Eschen, in her response, said the Legionnaire did not tell her when the publication went to press.

The Legionnaire editor called her on a Monday. The paper went to press

on a Friday. Her staff also knew the Legionnaire had called. She wasn't on vacation or sick, so five days is plenty of time to respond.

Von Eschen claimed the Legionnaire totally made up that she would only grant a 1 percent reduction. The truth is that the Legionnaire attributed the comment to the Post 201 members, who all got that idea from Von Eschen herself in a prior meeting they had.

The good news is that the local newspaper, the Kanabec County Times, took up the matter. Post 201 Commander Alan Skramstad says Von Eschen worked with Post 201 to reduce property taxes to 1.75 percent.

Thank you, Kanabec County Times, for fighting for your veterans.

—Tim Engstrom, Legionnaire editor

The statue "Silent Battle" at Mora Post 201 depicts a veteran dealing with PTSD.



# Tour of Minn. had great turnout

Continued from Page 1

In 2017, he was campaigning to be national commander within two years when he was cited for driving under the influence and was facing a felony charge. His campaign was suspended and he lost his national chairmanship. He was in a deep, dark place and was suicidal.

"My team within The American Legion let me know that they were there to take care of me, to get me the VA treatment I needed," he said. "They stayed in touch, helped bond my family together, and, to this day, that is why I truly embrace our 'Be the One' mission."

LaCoursiere's last drink was Oct. 1, 2017. He was able to resume his campaign five years later and was elected national commander in New Orleans at the end of August 2024.

The national commander reminded audience members that everyone must strive to speak with each other, not just talk at each other.

"We must listen, not just hear. And we must see one another, not merely look at."

His theme is L.U.V., which stands for "Loyalty, Unity, Valor." He spoke of his love for the Legion Family and wants young veterans to experience the same love so they can enhance the organization.

## Be the One app

LaCoursiere ended up doing 17 media interviews during the tour. His aide, Butch Hansen, said most statewide tours have only two or three. The commander called Minnesota's tour "top-notch" several times.

During his interviews, he encouraged people to get out their cellphones and download the "Be the One" app. It walks users through steps to prevent suicides of anyone, not just veterans. It is found on Apple's App Store and on Google Play. Just search "be the one."

"We can have the resources we need right at our fingertips at the moment we need them," he said.

The American Legion worked hand in hand with the Columbia Lighthouse Project to develop the mobile app.

## VA staff cuts

The American Legion has not made public statements about potential cuts to the VA staffing, he said, because it enables Legion staff in D.C. to talk with



**Army veteran, Purple Heart recipient, book author and motivational speaker John Kriesel is the director of veteran services in Anoka County and a member of St. Paul Park Post 98. He turned out for breakfast at Fridley Post 303 to speak with National Commander James LaCoursiere. KSTP was there, too. He spoke on MPR two days before. See more photos from the tour at [facebook.com/MNLegion](https://facebook.com/MNLegion).**

decision-makers and have real conversations.

"We do not jump on the bandwagon. We want to have a complete dialogue with the key players," he said.

LaCoursiere said the Legion is very aware of the report of a projected 83,000 staff cuts from the Department of Veterans Affairs. That, he said, looks to be a working figure based on 2019 levels — prior to the 2022 passage of the PACT Act.

He said the administration will produce a report by the middle of April, then a review in mid-May, with a decision in mid-June.

"We feel there still is time to work with Congress," he said.

The American Legion is watching to ensure health care of veterans and benefits are not impacted. He said the Legion believes that a staff reduction of 83,000 would leave the VA unable to service the veterans who receive VA health care via the PACT Act.

"We are asking Congress to keep their word," LaCoursiere told the audience in La Crescent. "We want them to be smart about making these cuts. Do not mess with our health care, military benefits or veterans benefits."

He added: "We will fight tooth and nail for them."

The commander shared the same sentiment in a meeting with Minneapolis VA officials

and shared the "Be the One" app. He also toured several areas of the hospital, such as the Spinal Cord Injury Center.

## Applicant medical reimbursement

There are times when military recruits (or their families) end up paying for the cost of required medical evaluations, which can be a deterrent to the enlistment process.

The commander and his aide will bring back to American Legion Headquarters in Indianapolis the feedback they received in meetings with officials. The problem of reimbursing medical evaluations was brought up by Maj. Gen. Shawn Manke, adjutant general of the Minnesota National Guard, and Lt. Col. Kristen Auge, director of strategic communications.

"Applicant medical reimbursement" is an effort to get the military to reimburse recruits or their families for those expenses.

U.S. Reps. Brad Finstad and Angie Craig introduced language in Congress last year that was included in the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act. It authorizes the secretary of defense for those reimbursements up to \$100. However, there was no funding tied to the program.

A similar bill was introduced by Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Todd Young (of Indiana).

Manke and Auge said recruiters for all branches of the armed forces would like members of The American Legion in Minnesota and nationwide to ask U.S. senators and representatives to fund "applicant medical reimbursement."

The Congressional Budget Office estimates the annual cost would be \$5 million.

Manke also spoke about lack of construction funding. He said the National Guard elements make up 20 percent of the U.S. joint forces. However, they only receive about 4 percent of the military's construction budget.

## 224th Transportation Company

There are about 130 soldiers in the company, said Sgt. 1st Class Samuel Sherer. The Faribault Armory, he said, is able to accommodate 170.

LaCoursiere asked him and his full-time staff what soldiers in the company needed help with. The soldiers said some of their team who drill one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer struggle with finances. Others struggle with housing post-AIT or when under extreme duress from life's hurdles. There don't seem to be resources, they said, for recruits coming from difficult home situations.

They would like to see incentives for careerists beyond the 12-year mark. Also, they would



**Paynesville Post 271 Commander Darin Mayer shares a laugh with the national commander.**

like morale boosts for all troops as retention gifts. An example was "incentive flights" — getting to ride in an airplane or helicopter at Camp Ripley after re-enlisting.

"Pilots tell us they have to go on the flights anyway, to get hours. Why not let a couple of

us on board?"

Another concern was the ASVAB test. One said it does not equate to an intelligence test because people learn hands-on or in various ways other than memorization. The person also said many soldiers don't know that they can retake the ASVAB.



**National Commander James LaCoursiere met with Minneapolis VA staff. From left are Department Adjutant Mike Maxa, VA Mpls. Associate Director Amy Archer, Department Membership Director Carla Tappainer, LaCoursiere, Department Service Officer Janet Lorenzo, Department Commander Carl Moon, Department Communications Director Tim Engstrom, VA Mpls. Director for Development and Civic Engagement Rachel Hammer, and VA Mpls. Deputy Director for Development and Civic Engagement Heather Wickberg. After a tour of the hospital, they met in Minneapolis VA Director Pat Kelly's office. Kelly himself was out of town that day.**

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**National Commander James LaCoursiere listens to soldiers with the 224th Transportation Company in Faribault.**





Veterans, spouses and their supporters from across Minnesota descended on the Capitol Rotunda on April 9.

# Commissioner concerned about Minnesota House budget proposal

Continued from Page 1

but the boos were louder. This was followed by a veteran who heckled the governor over his military service, followed by another veteran who told that veteran to shut up. This footage then made its way across social media platforms in edited clips. “Fortunately, neither of those two veterans were wearing American Legion caps,” said Randy Olson, a member of the Department Legislative Committee. The American Legion is a nonpartisan organization, and its members strive to remain focused on veterans issues, not on party politics. Olson, a member of

Winnebago Post 82, added it was strange to see young men walking around with T-shirts that said “Veterans Against Trump.” This message of being for or against candidates is not what the CTF is about. He doubted whether they were part of any of the eight CTF organizations. They didn’t watch proceedings from one place like Legion, VFW, DAV, PVA and other veterans did. “They purposely walked around and puffed out their chests, as if to say, ‘Read my shirt.’ I don’t bring my personal views to Veterans Day on the Hill. Neither should they.” Moon said the CTF will address these issues at its May meeting.

Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Brad Lindsay spoke on how the House budget bill was cutting funding for veteran homelessness. “Ending homelessness among veterans is a marathon, not a sprint,” Lindsay said. “After many years of effort and support from the Legislature on the issue, MDVA is right at the finish line with our partners in Ramsey County. This budget will take us out at our kneecaps.” Ramsey is the last remaining area in Minnesota that hasn’t declared “functional zero” in terms of handling veterans homelessness. If it does, Minnesota becomes the fourth state to reach this goal. The other three are Connecticut,

Delaware and Virginia. Lindsay said the House budget hinders the MDVA in its staffing and operational needs at the three new veterans homes, resulting in empty beds at Bemidji, Preston and Montevideo. The commissioner praised the past success of veteran omnibus bills and said veterans expect that to continue for years to come. He said the MDVA supports the CTF’s efforts to protect veterans from claim sharks. “Let me be clear. This is about protecting veterans and ensuring that they keep every dime they have earned with their service,” Lindsay said. “This is not about limiting their choice. This is about ensuring that they are making an informed choice and not feeding the very sharks that have been flying in from other states to feed in these hallways since the session started.”

Moon’s speech also pushed for passage of the claim shark bill. “To my knowledge, 11 other states have passed claim-shark bills,” he said. “The American Legion is pushing Congress to pass one, too. In the meantime, we need a claim-shark bill here in Minnesota.” Moon called for removal of property taxes for post homes of veteran service organizations and he called for the passage of the bill that adjusts property tax burden for disabled veterans for the first time in 14 years. Department Legislative Chair Kristy Janigo spoke at the Armory. Later, she was the emcee at the Capitol. She also ran down the list of bills

veterans want passed this session: omnibus, property taxes and claim sharks. “Some of my colleagues and in veteran service organizations have stories that would boil your blood about unaccredited parties taking advantage of veterans through aggressive marketing tactics for services they could have gotten for free from an accredited VSO representative,” Janigo said. She added that food insecurity is a growing problem among veterans. She asked for state funding for a pilot program

to continue for Metro Meals on Wheels in Hennepin, Ramsey and Anoka counties. She asked for that to be expanded to all counties through Lutheran Social Services CORE, which is administered by the MDVA. Finally, she called on the state to provide tax cuts for charitable gambling considering the harm the Legislature did to e-pulltabs in 2023. “We demand tax cuts to make us whole again and to allow us to continue to serve our communities through charitable donations,” Janigo said.



The American Legion Department of Minnesota produced a stand-up cutout image of the “Monument to the Living” statue on the Capitol grounds. He says. “Why do you forget us?” In this photo, from left, are state Rep. Emma Greenman of Minneapolis, Deputy Commissioner Eric Meittunen and Department Legislative Chair Kristy Janigo.

## LEGIONNAIRE BENEFITS

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- On-The-Move Travel Accident
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- Medicare Supplement Insurance
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- Long-Term Care
- Lifeline Medical Alert Service
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**Hospital HELP Plan** — Provides benefits for hospital stays including intensive care, cardiac care, care for cancer, rehabilitative facilities, and V.A. hospitals.\*

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**Accidental Death** — Helps provide financial protection for you and your family. Up to \$5,000.00 LegionCare AD coverage at no cost to Legionnaires is available: (activation required).\* You can also purchase additional Accident coverage up to \$100,000.00.

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Veterans, supporters, media and legislators fill the Capitol Rotunda on April 9.

## Event slated for Marshall in October

Continued from Page 1

used the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), the most evidence-supported tool of its kind. It asks a simple series of questions that anyone can use anywhere to help prevent suicide. Veteran Suicide Prevention Coordinator Kristi Stites and Veteran Community-Based Services Director Rachel Johnson are working with The American Legion Department of Minnesota and National American Legion, as well as the Columbia Lighthouse Project, to modify the app to be Minnesota-specific. This way, resources such as contact information for county veteran service officers, maps to the nearest hospital system and the Veterans Linkage Line (1-888-LinkVet) can be added. Columbia Lighthouse Project’s Wendy Lakso, who

provides “Be the One” training, encouraged Legion Family members to download the app but said it is a work in progress. “We’re going to refine this a little bit more. We can change these questions,” she said. “We may drill down a little bit more and say, ‘Are you a spouse, are you whatever?’ The issue is we don’t want to ask too many questions. Because if you’re in a situation where you need to get someone help immediately, you’re not going to sit and answer 10 questions. We have to try to streamline as best as we can.” Lakso said one of the key aspects of the app is its privacy. “I don’t know who you are. I don’t have your phone number. I don’t know any of that on this app,” she said. “That’s important for you to know as a veteran. I can’t track you. All I can

know is what location you’re in by ZIP code.” Johnson and Stites will work with American Legion “Be the One” manager Tony Cross. Cross will be the speaker at the Department Fall Conference in late October. **Minnesota Veteran Suicide Prevention & Awareness Day** The seventh Minnesota Veteran Suicide Prevention & Awareness Day is Oct. 4 at Red Barron Arena in Marshall. Because the MDVA is backing The American Legion’s suicide-prevention efforts, look for the “Be the One” mission to be part of the event. The vendor fair and networking starts at 9 a.m. The program is at 10 a.m. It is followed by an hour for more networking. More details are forthcoming.



# The SAL Update:

## Suicide prevention becomes a very real story while in VA medical center

Hello, Minnesota American Legion Family!

As some of you know, I was quite ill, and I spent 16 days in the VA hospital. I have to voice my admiration and respect for the doctors and nurses, especially the nurses. While I was in the hospital, a veteran friend of mine and I were on the phone. He was on speaker, and he was saying that he was going to commit suicide. He just couldn't deal with life anymore.

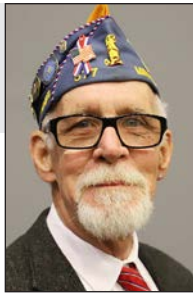
A nurse was in the room and overheard the conversation. My friend lives in New Jersey and had been moving around to different housing situations, and I wasn't sure where he was exactly. I had conferred in another friend of ours into the call and together we were trying to talk him out of his plan to kill himself.

The nurse asked me for his phone number and I quietly gave it to her. She contacted the VA police at the Minneapolis VA hospital, and they, in turn, contacted the VA police at the East Orange VA Medical Center, and they contacted the local police department who were able to locate my friend's phone.

Police in the city where he was dispatched a squad car and an ambulance to his location. The police officers talked to him and convinced him to get in the ambulance and go to the VA hospital and get some help with his PTSD issues and he agreed to go to get some help. The nurse saved my friend's life. I will be eternally grateful for the nurse at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Medical Center

### Detachment commander

John Weiss



for stepping in and saving my friend's life.

That nurse is a shining example of the staff at the VA hospital here in Minnesota. And I have to say that during my time at the VA hospital, the nursing staff was outstanding in every respect. And not just the nurses — all of the other staff that I encountered during my time there were wonderful in their interactions with the veterans in the hospital.

I put the nurse in for a commendation for her actions to save my friend's life. My friend is receiving continuing treatment at his local VA and is getting the help that he needs to resolve his issues.

That is my personal story of "Be the One." Sometimes, it takes more than one; it takes a team effort to "Be the One" to step in and stop veteran suicide.

I am in the process of my recovery from the influenza type A that made me so ill. It affected my heart and lungs. I had pneumonia in my right lung, and my heart isn't pumping effectively, but I'm on medication to help my heart work better. I want to thank all the members of the Legion Family who sent me get-well cards, called me and gave their wishes for a quick recovery from my illness and those of you who came to visit me.

I also want to personally thank the Legion Family who

did a hospital visit during my stay, and I'd like to publicly thank Joe Jansen for his visit as part of that hospital visitation. When I was admitted to the hospital, there was a shortage of beds because of the influenza outbreak. There were veterans, myself included, who were sitting in the Emergency Room waiting for a bed to open.

The department service officer stepped up and went to the hospital administrator and pointed out the condition of those veterans waiting for a bed who were basically trapped in the ER on a gurney. This got us out of the ER and into a real bed in the hospital.

I am well on my way to a full recovery and am excited for the next few months as I finish my term as detachment commander. I plan on being at as many events of the Legion Family as I possibly can. I'm looking forward to seeing you all. Thank you all for your support and remember to "Be the One"!

*John Weiss of St Paul Arcade-Phalen Squadron 577 is the commander of the Detachment of Minnesota for the Sons of The American Legion. His theme is "Stepping Up For Veterans."*

## Volunteerism is Americanism on CPR

By Casey Lenort  
Americanism Chairman

Greetings, Minnesota American Legion Family. I currently serve as the Detachment of Minnesota Americanism chairman. This program covers a wide variety of programs such as: Boys State, flag etiquette, volunteerism, Scouting, color/honor guard duties and so many more.

Anytime you help your post or your community volunteering, this is considered Americanism. Please keep track of all hours and monies donated to programs and add this to your Consolidated Post Report (CPR) or Consolidated Squad Report (CSR).

These forms are available online now. You would be shocked to find out how much we do

for our communities and all the donations we raise throughout the year. All hours for when you attend rallies, meetings, conferences or conventions counts as well.

This report gets put together by department and goes into national to be submitted for awards to be received at National Convention.

Our little post at Nicollet won the best Children & Youth report for the region last year at convention in New Orleans. Dave Vulcan and I just couldn't believe we won.

What a proud moment for the Detachment of Minnesota! I'm a firm believer in this program and want to see it grow and improve each year. I hope to see you soon at a future rally or convention.

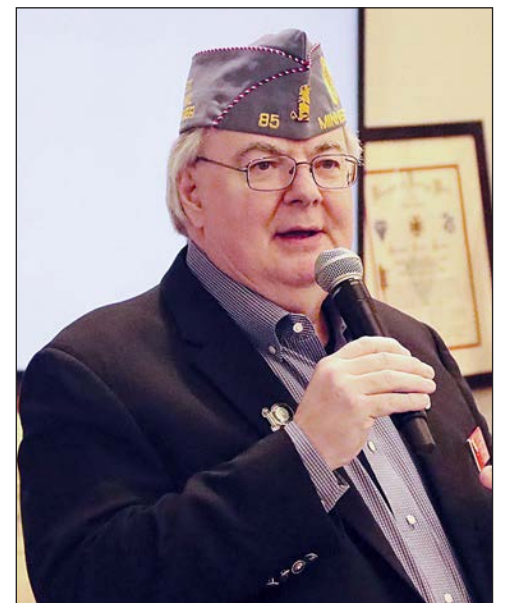


Shawn Davis

The Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Minnesota Spring Conference was held March 14-15 at VFW Post 1215 on the north side of Rochester. Here, Commander John Weiss, Adjutant Jason Voss and Past National Commander Doug Bible start the meeting of the Executive Committee, which happened prior to the general session.



SAL members who run the annual John Zgoda Disabled Veterans Deer Hunt at Legionville each fall gathered at the podium to report on the 2024 hunt. Holding the microphone is Past Detachment Commander Dave Vulcan. They plan to add a turkey hunt in 2025.



Prominent members motivated the conference-goers, such as Past National Vice Commander Robert Bristo, left, and Past National Commander Joe Mayne.



Many members also donated checks to the SAL Commander's Project. Donations can be made out to "Minnesota American Legion Foundation" with "Fund 99" in the memo. At the end of the fiscal year, one lump sum is give to the cause by the commander. In this image, presenting a donation on behalf of Winona Squadron 9.



David Arend Jr. of Forest Lake Squadron 225 holds up bags of peanuts for a live auction that raised funds for the American Legion Child Well-being Foundation (better known as CWF).



# Endorsements

## 2 past department commanders are endorsed for Alternate NECman

Editor's note: We are listing them alphabetically by last name.

### Tom Fernlund, Waite Park Post 428

Thomas A. Fernlund has been endorsed by Silver Star Post 428 in Waite Park for Alternate National Executive Committeeman for 2025-2027.

Fernlund served in the Air Force from 1981-1992. He is a 33-year honorary life member at Waite Park Post 428, served as post commander for two terms and has been the adjutant since 2014.

On the Department of Minnesota level, he served as commander in 2021-2022 and was involved in the launch of American Legion Fastpitch Softball in Minnesota. He is currently the president of the Department Convention Corp. and a member of the Minnesota American Legion Hospital Association Board of Directors.

Other department offices held were vice commander,

membership director and sergeant-at-arms.

On the 6th District level, Fernlund served as commander, adjutant, vice commander, membership director. He presently is the district adjutant and softball director. He is a past commander of the Stearns County Council

On the national level, Fernlund serves on the Media and Communications Commission (since 2013) and is a 2007 graduate of National American Legion College. He is a member of ANAVICUS and the past department and district commander clubs.

He is a member of Auxiliary Unit 428, Sons of the American Legion Squadron 428, 40&8



Tom Fernlund

Voiture 415, DAV and is the St. Cloud Area Metrovets finance officer.

Fernlund has been employed at Rex Granite Co. in St. Cloud as a sales representative for 23 years. Tom and his wife, Veronica (an Air Force veteran, past 6th District commander and current department

vice commander) have been married 36 years in June and have two sons, two daughters and three grandsons.

Son Chris is currently serving in the Air Force, daughter Kaitlin is serving in the Navy, son Michael is serving in the Minnesota Army National Guard and daughter Kristen is a schoolteacher.

### Paul Hassing, Bloomington Post 550

Paul Hassing has been endorsed by Earl C. Hill Post 550 and by the 10th District for Alternate National Executive Committeeman for 2025-2027.

Hassing retired from the Army Reserve in June 2023 after 32 years of service (17 active and 15 reserve). He supported the War on Terrorism with deployments in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan, earning a Bronze Star and Meritorious Service Medal. He also participated in a humanitarian mission in Papua New Guinea.

A 19-year Paid Up For Life member of the American Legion Bloomington Post 550, Hassing has served as post commander, post adjutant and membership director. At the 10th District level, he has held roles including commander and vice commander.

Additionally, he has served at the Department of Minnesota as commander, membership director and on various committees.



Paul Hassing

He was also state director for the Legion Riders.

Nationally, Hassing is on the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Council and graduated from the National American Legion College in 2010. He is a member of ANAVICUS and 40/8 Voiture 481.

Paul and his wife, Dr. Jody Hassing, have five children and 10 grandchildren, all members of the Legion Family.

## A message for post commanders ...

I hope this finds you well. I am reaching out to you today on behalf of The American Legion to request your support for our Minnesota veterans.

We are currently seeking donations for Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund (aka Fund 85), which plays a crucial role in enabling us to continue our mission of providing vital services and support to our veterans.

Donating to Fund 85 goes far beyond supporting our veterans — it strengthens the community as a whole. By ensuring these vital services remain operational, we help improve the welfare and prosperity of both our veterans and society.

Your generous contribution allows us to assist veterans with a range of crucial needs, including car repairs, overdue utility bills, phone bills, and housing security to prevent homelessness. We also have provided support to widows of our Minnesota veterans in need. Assisted to purchase vehicles for veterans, ensuring they can commute to work or medical appointments.

In times of urgent need, we've supplied food and gas gift cards and referred veterans to local food banks.

Financial stress can often be a triggering factor for suicide ideation, especially when individuals feel overwhelmed by debt,

### Veterans Rehabilitation

Janet Lorenzo



bills, or the fear of losing their home. Many veterans face these pressures daily, and without the assistance Fund 85 provides, these stresses can escalate into feelings of hopelessness.

By donating, you're not only helping alleviate financial burdens, but you're also providing a lifeline that can help prevent these tragic outcomes. Your support plays a vital role in saving lives and ensuring veterans have the resources and hope to move forward.

Fund 85 utilizes the "Unite Us" program to manage our caseload. This program enables us to refer veterans to other organizations that have specialized resources to better assist them. Our dedicated team ensures that the funds are distributed wisely, focusing not only on immediate financial relief but also on equipping veterans with long-term financial management skills. We believe in empowering our veterans to be self-sufficient and financially stable. Therefore, through Unite Us, we connect them with organizations that can teach them how to budget effectively, ensuring their future financial well-being.

We understand that there are

various ways to allocate your charitable funds, and we appreciate your consideration of our cause. Any contribution, big or small, will make a substantial impact on the lives of our Minnesota veterans. Your support is an investment in the welfare of our community and a demonstration of gratitude for the sacrifices made by our brave veterans.

If your post is willing and able to make a donation, please make your check payable to "Minnesota American Legion Foundation" and indicate "Fund 85" in the memo section. Checks not written to the Minnesota American Legion Foundation will be returned.

The foundation is a 501(c)(3) and can accept gambling funds.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and your support of Minnesota veterans.

Janet Lorenzo is the American Legion Department of Minnesota service officer. Email her at [dso@mnlegion.org](mailto:dso@mnlegion.org). She is a member of St. Paul Park Post 98.

## Time to let someone else be NECman

Commander Carl Moon's testimonial dinner in Walker was well-attended for a job well done by our commander.

Spring meetings and NEC meetings will be in Indianapolis. We have several veterans attending from Minnesota. District conventions start May 17. There are four of them that weekend.

I hope someone from your post did attend Minnesota American Legion College at Camp Ripley. It is a very good training opportunity for those interested in taking on a post or district office. I ask you all to please send in your Post Consolidated Report. Every post does something. The CPR is due June 1.

Also send in your report to update your post officers, even if they are remaining the same. This is due by the department convention each July.

Minnesota has the best Legion camp anywhere in the nation. Please sign up your youth for this one-week safety camp at Legionville. It is a week of learning, training and fun.

All posts should be at 95 percent in membership by now. Time to do check in face-to-face with that member who has not renewed. They need the Legion, and we need them.

### National Report

Bill Barbknecht



A simple reminder of the things the American Legion has done in the past, the VA and all the health and prescription services, the GI Bill and of course in Minnesota Fund 85 for those in need of some temporary help. On May 3-9, the sixth and final renewal notice for 2025 will go out. "Be the One" to sign up a new member.

I hope you made the time to hear National Commander James LaCoursiere speak while he was in Minnesota. We had great turnouts at posts across southern Minnesota and the metro, and the local media came to all but two stops.

Minnesotans also heard the commander on Minnesota Public Radio on March 24. If you want to go back and listen, it was an episode of "Minnesota Now with Nina Moini." He was the second guest. The host asked about suicide prevention and the "Be the One" mobile app.

At our March 8 DEC meeting at Chanhassen Post 580, I asked if the attendees had heard of Jelly Roll? I stated that I am like a hit song he sings called "I Am Not OK."

He sings, "I'm not OK, but it's all gonna be all right."

I told everyone I was alternate NEC for four years, and NEC for six years. It is past time for me to step down. We are gone over six weeks a year for The American Legion. It is time I step aside. *I will not be running for NEC.*

I will fill out my term, which closes at the 106th National Convention in Tampa Aug. 23-28. Donna and I thank you all for your friendship and hospitality over the years. We have met so many good people working to help our veterans and communities. That is what we all are about.

We look forward to seeing you July 9-12 in Willmar at the Department Convention. If I can be of any help, please call me at 218-770-6264.

Bill Barbknecht of Fergus Falls Post 30 is the Department of Minnesota's National Executive Committeeman.



Commander Carl Moon listens as NECman Bill Barbknecht tells the Department Executive Committee on March 8 that he will not seek reelection at the Department Convention in July. The meeting was lit by bright sunlight coming through the blinds at Chanhassen Post 580.

## 1st District leads membership effort

Continued from Page 1

in July in Willmar. Moon is with Zimmerman Post 560 in the 6th District and lives in Walker.

His wife, Peggy Moon, also of Post 560, is the current alternate NECman, and she withdrew plans to seek re-election because of health concerns. (See her letter on Page 4.)

Her decision has resulted in two past department commanders, Tom Fernlund and Paul Hassing, seeking the alternate NEC spot. They will be on the ballot at the fall convention.

Hassing is with Bloomington Post 550 in the 10th District and lives in Montgomery. He was department commander in 2023-24.

Fernlund is with Waite Park Post 428 in the 6th District and lives in Saint Cloud. He was department commander in 2021-22.

Both of their endorsements with full bios are in this issue.

Barbknecht's announcement was a touching departure, and Legionnaires in the room applauded and hugged him. He was alternate NECman for four years prior to becoming NECman. He spoke of how Minnesota is respected at the national level.

In other news, Department Adjutant Mike Maxa announced that Microsoft Dynamic 365 will replace Personify ThreeSixty as the software behind MyLegion.org, the online database of American Legion membership. National will begin rolling it out with Emblem Sales first.

He said The American Legion no longer will sponsor an Indy Car.

The response to the books documenting the stories of military veterans has been

phenomenal, Maxa said. Publishing Concepts Inc. will ship them by late spring.

At the rally itself, Membership Director Carla Tappainer announced that the 1st District led the way with 91.97 percent, with 6th District in second at 90.4 and 2nd District in third at 90.1.

Tappainer also mentioned Minnesota was in 17th place nationally percentage-wise, at 87.25.

In the Auxiliary, Membership Director Hope Wilson announced the 6th District placed first, with 89.39 percent. In second was the 3rd, at 87.88, and in third was the 1st at 87.73.

Sons of The American Legion Membership Director Gary Richardson said the 1st District took first place at 88.74. The 4th District was second at 86.49, and the 7th District was third at 86.46.



# Get your motor running, head out ...

Hello, Legion Family!

Happy spring! I have seen so many bikes out already this spring. I am looking forward to getting mine out soon.

It has been a very busy spring for our family. I had the chance to attend the Anoka Legion Birthday party. It was a great time! Thank you, Anoka American Legion Family. I was also honored to be invited to Moorhead Post 21 to talk about Legionville and all the great activities that take place there.

The Moorhead American Legion Riders had a pancake breakfast and silent auction to raise funds to send kids to Legionville Safety Summer Camp this summer. Along with the Moorhead Legion Family, they raised enough funds to send 13 kids to camp! Awesome job!

Minnesota ALR Road Captain Ted Berg has been working with Steve Hoopman to plan the Fund 85 Run, which will be in northern Minnesota this year. We will start with a kick-off party on July 23 at Forest

## Legion Riders

Jody Hassing



Lake Post 225 and will end on Saturday, July 26, at Paynesville Post 271.

Information for the Fund 85 Run will be posted on the Fund 85 Facebook page and on our website – [www.mnalr.org](http://www.mnalr.org). Watch Facebook and the website for upcoming information/meeting about the run.

If your Post Legion Family is interested in hosting the Riders this year, please contact me or the MNALR Ride Captain, Ted Berg (contact information on the [mnalr.org](http://mnalr.org) website).

The Minnesota National Legacy/Mission Ride will take place on Aug. 16 and will be hosted by the Walker American Legion Riders.

American Legion Riders, please remember you will receive a consolidated chapter report form from our secretary, Shawn Davis. Please complete

the consolidated chapter report and return it to Davis (secretary@mnalr.org) as soon as possible, so we can report all the wonderful things that our chapters are doing in Minnesota.

If you would like assistance setting up a chapter at your post, please let me or your district Riders representative know so we can help you get things going. If you are interested in having me talk to your chapter or district 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.*

# What's Happening?

## National Veteran Wheelchair Games coming to Minneapolis

MINNEAPOLIS — The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are coming to Minneapolis this summer.

The games are presented by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Paralyzed Veterans of America. They are set for July 17-22.

The games are looking for volunteers. To volunteer, visit [wheelchairgames.org](http://wheelchairgames.org) online and click "volunteer." No prior experience is required.

If you wish to register as an athlete, click "athlete registration." Participation is open to veterans living with spinal cord injuries, amputations, multiple sclerosis or other central neurological conditions. Physical disabilities must be permanent, measurable and impact mobility. All veterans registering for the National Veterans Wheelchair Games must be eligible to receive care at a VA medical facility.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are the largest adaptive sports and rehabilitation event designed exclusively for U.S. military veterans with disabilities.

Event venues are scheduled to be the Minneapolis Convention Center, Lake Minnetonka Regional Park, Mill City Museum, Lake Harriet, Bowlero Lanes in Brooklyn Park and the Jean K. Freeman Aquatic Center on the University of Minnesota campus.

## Donate a challenge coin to Post 523 bar, literally

GOLDEN VALLEY — In the last issue, readers learned Chester Bird Post 523 in Golden Valley was selling its building to the Breck School and planning to move to a former Red Lobster on Highway 55.

Now, the veterans at that post are asking for challenge coins from all across the community, state and nation for the design of the post's new bar top.

Commander Craig Hartman said they especially want ones for military branches, veteran service organizations, law enforcement, firefighters and emergency medical personnel. However, they will accept most any relateable challenge coin. They do not want pins.

"They would be embedded in Lexan and be evenly distributed around the entire U-shaped bar that will be approximately 70 feet in length," he said.

Legionnaire readers can send the coins to American Legion Post 523, 200 Lilac Drive N., Golden Valley, MN 55422.

## Kentucky Derby party slated for Lino Lakes

LINO LAKES — Post 566 in Lino Lakes will host the "Run for the Roses" Kentucky Derby Party at 4 p.m. Saturday, May 3.

"Come dressed to impress in your Derby Day best," says the fliers.

There will be a contest for Most Dapper Gentleman's Outfit and for Ladies Best Hat. There will be a photo booth and Derby-inspired games and beverages.

## 10th District leaders to hold big get-together

OSSEO — The 10th District commander, the other commander, the president and the director are hosting one big testimonial dinner on May 31 at Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172.

If you've been in the Legion long enough, you know that means Legion commander, SAL commander, Auxiliary president and Riders director.

Social hour for the Mighty 10th District Family Testimonial begins at 5:30 p.m., with dinner at 6:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 per person. The meal is pork loin, potato, vegetable, roll and salad. Register by sending payment and attendee names to American Legion Post 172, c/o Carley Lynch, 260 Fourth Ave. SE, Osseo, MN 55369.

Contact [marketing@legionpost172.org](mailto:marketing@legionpost172.org) if you plan to pay on site instead of by mail.

## Magnus Ride rolls at May 10 from Post 102

ANOKA — Kickstands go up at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 10, at Anoka Post 102 at the fourth annual Magus Ride for Veterans.

The ride is a fundraiser for the Magnus Veterans Foundation in Dayton. All motorcycles are welcome.

It is \$30 per rider and \$20 per passenger. Dinner is included. There will be music, food, prizes, a silent auction and other fun. The ride concludes at Zimmerman Post 560.

Also, Magnus Veterans Foundation hosts a pancake breakfast 8 a.m.-noon Sunday, April 27, at the Sundance Entertainment Center outside of Dayton. The price is a goodwill donation. It is open to the general public.

## Military Ball planned for April 26

SPRING GROVE — The 18th annual Military



At the Appreciation Rally on March 8 at Chanhassen Post 580, Wayne Beierman of Eagan Post 594 was recognized as 3rd District Vice Commander of the Year.



At the Appreciation on March 8 at Chanhassen Post 580, Jeff Thompson of Paynesville Post 271 was recognized as 6th District Vice Commander of the Year.

Ball is scheduled for Saturday, April 26, at the Fest Building in Spring Grove.

This event honors all military personnel who have served our country — past and current — and from every aspect of the military, as well as their spouses and families. It is also open to those who support the military or anyone who wishes to attend. In past years attendees have come from a wide range of the tri state area - and several have come from farther away.

The Military Ball includes dinner, ceremony, entertainment, photo portraits and more.

Attire for the ball is Sunday best, semi-formal or formal, with many wearing their military uniform or the uniform of a veteran's organization. Organizers request no casual street clothes.

Cost for the evening is \$30 per person. Attendance is by RSVP only.

Cocktails and photos begin at 4:30 p.m. and dinner will be served at 5:45 p.m. The dinner plate includes roast beef and chicken.

Guest speaker will be Ret. Colonel Jennifer J. Fuller. Following the program, a variety of music for dancing and listening pleasure will be provided from 8 to 10:30 p.m. by Cheers Big Band from the La Crosse area.

To sign up, contact Gary Buxengard at 507-498-3461 or [janleebuxengard@gmail.com](mailto:janleebuxengard@gmail.com).

## WWII Round Table to host special guest

ST. PAUL — The Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table announced a very special program for Tuesday, April 22.

The history program, held monthly at the Minnesota History Center, will host 103-year-old Maj. John H. "Lucky" Luckadoo, the last surviving original cadre pilot of the 100th Bomb Group in World War II. He will share stories of flying combat missions over the deadly skies of Hitler's Fortress Europe against the German Luftwaffe.

Luckadoo survived 28 combat missions flying the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress with the "Bloody Hundredth."

The main program begins at 7 p.m. in the 3M Auditorium. The Minnesota History Center is at 345 W. Kellogg Blvd. in St. Paul.

Arriving early is recommended.

## Legion Day at Target Field is June 25

Attend American Legion Day at Target Field. The Minnesota Twins take on the Seattle Mariners at 6:40 p.m. June 25.

We welcome anyone who is part of the American Legion Family: veterans, relatives, supporters, Legion Baseball & Softball players, coaches and their families, and anyone who participates in any American Legion program, such the Riders, Oratorical Contest, Boys and Girls State, Legionville, you name it. We want to have the largest American Legion presence ever at this game.

Be there for all the action. Purchase your discounted tickets here: <https://fevo-enterprise.com/event/American8>

The tickets are \$42 and the seats are a bit past third base.

The purchase deadline is June 20. Commander Carl Moon will toss out the first pitch, and Membership Director Carla Tappainer will raise the U.S. flag.

For groups of 20+ and special requests, please reach out to Liz Pilarski: [lizpilarski@twins.com](mailto:lizpilarski@twins.com) or 612-659-3852.

## St. Cloud VA offers day to get rid of old drugs

ST. CLOUD — The St. Cloud VA Medical Center is hosting a Medication Take Back Day on Saturday, April 26, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Veterans and members of the public can take advantage of this special opportunity to safely dispose of expired medications, including controlled substances. The medical center is at 4801 Veterans Drive, in St. Cloud. Please enter Building 1 by the flagpoles for access to the drop box location.

## Donate to The Minnesota Legionnaire

I would like to help The Minnesota Legionnaire nonprofit publication offset rising postage costs by donating \$\_\_\_\_\_. Please make the check out to "The Minnesota Legionnaire" and mail it to The Minnesota Legionnaire, 20 W. 12th St. Room 300A, St. Paul, MN 55155. You will be acknowledged in the paper for your gift. The Minnesota Legionnaire is a separate nonprofit from the Department of Minnesota is allowed to receive gambling funds under Code A6.



# Listening Post



Riders chapter provides "last ride" to a member with terminal cancer.

## Chapter 56 honors a founder with ride around Fountain Lake

By National HQ

ALBERT LEA — More than a dozen members of Chapter 56 in Albert Lea, Minn., honor one of its founders with a ride around a local lake.

A 2010 American Legion Legacy Run stop hosted by Leo Carey Post 56 in Albert Lea, Minn., inspired Legionnaire Wes Halverson to start an American Legion Riders chapter four years later when he was serving as post commander.

He was joined in his effort by fellow Post 56 member and longtime friend Jim Hockinson, as well as another interested member. A chapter was formed, one that now can call close to 90 American Legion Family members as Legion Riders.

But after being diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer, Hockinson can no longer ride his motorcycle. That didn't stop Chapter 56 from getting him out on a bike one more time.

On July 24, more than a dozen Chapter 56 Riders took part in a procession that included Hockinson riding on the back of Halverson's motorcycle. The group picked up Hockinson at the Thorne Crest Senior Living Community, where he is under hospice care, and rode him around Fountain Lake.

"We talked, we laughed and we cried," said Halverson, who serves as Chapter 56's sergeant-at-arms. "It was so hard. It was a hard thing, but it was a happy thing. I asked him, 'How are you doing?' And he said, 'Best day ever.' He was so happy. He said, 'I got my last ride. I finally got my last ride.'"

Halverson and Hockinson served together in the Minnesota National Guard for more than 20 years and became good friends. And they were instrumental in starting Chapter 56.

"When I started the American Legion Riders chapter in Albert Lea, I didn't know anything about it," said Halverson, who at the time didn't even ride a motorcycle. "I was trying to figure out, 'How do I get the members back'—especially those veterans of the Vietnam War up to Gulf War and so on.

"I served in the military for almost 28 years, but I was never deployed. So, I could not communicate with those individuals that were deployed, that did combat service."

He recalled the Legacy Run stop and started doing research on starting a chapter. "I had never ridden a bike. I had never had a (motorcycle) license," he said. "So, I put the message out in our newsletter ... that we were going to have a meeting. And Jim was the first guy that walked through the door."

Halverson, Hockinson and another interested member — Arnold Anderson — worked for months promoting the program through local media. Now the chapter sits at around 90 members.

The chapter is very active, donating to various veteran-related organizations that include Quilts of Valor and Honor Flight. It has also bought the materials and then built a handicap-accessible ramp for a fellow Legionnaire's home, and gives out challenge coins at Christmas to veterans and spouses of veterans living in assisted-living centers and retirement homes.

The idea to provide Hockinson with being on the back of a motorcycle again came from a group ride. "We are down riding motorcycles in Savannah, Ill., about 14 of us," Halverson said. "While we were down there, we all got to talking about that we needed to do something for Jim. They'd given him a week to two weeks."

"I got back home, and I called another of our (charter) Riders (Dave Nelson) who was a good friend of Jim's. He did a lot in all this."

The pair both had the same idea: to give Hockinson a final ride on the back of a motorcycle. "I said, 'What if I brought my trike, we put him on there and give him a ride on the trike,'" Halverson said. "I said that I would be honored if I could do that, because Jim and I had gone through so much together."

The original date for the ride was rained out, but the second day, the weather was perfect. The ride received both broadcast and print media coverage and was "wonderful," Halverson said.

"We just care so much about our chapter and our Riders," Halverson said. "This is our family. What we did for Jim, I can't explain how grateful I am to be able to do that for him. It was a wonderful thing to do for him. We did what we could for Jim."



On March 2, Bellechester Post 598 members Jim Dicke, Joan Welscher and John Huneke presented Minneapolis VA Medical Center ER Director Wendy Young a check for \$1,200 for the Closet 54 assistant project. This project provides emergency clothing and basic needs assistance to veterans who are admitted to the ER.



The 2nd District Jr. Shooting Sports team finished second at the 2025 Minnesota Civilian Marksmanship Program State Championship, hosted by Minnesota Centershots at Anoka Post 102 on March 22. The team included Joe and Braedon Kor, right, from Pipestone Post 6, and, at left, Shawn Mathews, Owen Horejsi and Nickelson Plaetz of Redwood Falls Post 36. Horejsi and Matthews fired their final match as civilians as both enlisted in the Minnesota National Guard. The team was coached by Jerry Ludwig and Scott Kor.



Brian Aich and Jeff Hanson were honored for their dedicated service to Milaca Post 178 during a birthday dinner March 22.



Owatonna Post 77 members present Legionnaire Howard Jacobson his 75-year continuous membership certificate. Jacobson is a Cold War veteran, 1947-1950, and served in England during the Berlin Airlift. He joined the USAAF in 1947 and was transferred into the USAF when it formed.



Legionnaires Amy Larson and Brad Pagel present a National Security Committee Scholarship at the Maverick Battalion ROTC ball on March 20 in Mankato.



Willmar Post 167 Commander John Christensen and Post Member LeRoy Carlson recently presented a \$4,000 donation to the Willmar High School Speech Department. Accepting the check is District 7's 2025 Oratorical Champion Alyson Johnson and classmates from the speech department.



Members of Owatonna Post 77 present Jack Olds with his 70-year continuous membership certificate. Olds served in the U.S. Navy for four years during the Korean War.



Pequot Lakes SAL Squadron Commander Rich Ugolini and 1st Vice Commander James Tayloe present a \$2,000 check to the Lakes Area Food Shelf.



Waite Park Post 428 Commander Joe Cordie presents an 80-year certificate to Kermit Eastman, 98. He is a Navy veteran who served on the destroyer USS Mullany.



# District commanders



## 1st District

Mark Maloney III



As I reflect on my two-year tenure as 1st District commander, I am filled with a sense of accomplishment, gratitude and pride. These years have been a transformative journey, shaping my leadership skills and deepening my commitment to serving the veterans, their families and the community at-large.

When I took on the role of commander, I knew the challenges and responsibilities ahead would be significant. The American Legion, with its rich history and unwavering dedication to veterans, presented an opportunity to make a lasting impact. I focused on fostering a culture of transparency, collaboration and innovation. By listening to the concerns and aspirations of Legion members, I was able to tailor our initiatives and programs to address their unique needs.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my tenure was strengthening the bonds within the community. The American Legion's mission to serve veterans and their families is deeply intertwined with the well-being of the local community. Through various outreach programs, we established partnerships with local businesses, schools and other organizations, creating a supportive network for our veterans.

Our annual community events, such as Veterans Day celebrations and Memorial Day ceremonies, became cornerstone moments that united people from all walks of life. The participation and enthusiasm of the community were truly heartening, and these events served as a poignant reminder of the collective gratitude we owe to our servicemen and women.

During these two years, we introduced several innovative programs aimed at enhancing the lives of our veterans. One notable initiative was the launch of the Veterans PTSD Support Program, which provides PTSD awareness and referrals to the correct mental health services

and workshops. Recognizing the challenges veterans face when transitioning to civilian life, this program successfully aided many in finding meaningful support and securing their futures.

Another significant accomplishment was the expansion of mental health services. Understanding the critical importance of mental health in overall well-being, we collaborated with health care providers to offer comprehensive mental health support, including counseling, therapy sessions, and peer support groups. This initiative not only provided essential services but also fostered a sense of belonging and community among veterans.

The journey was not without its challenges. Navigating the complexities of leadership within a large and diverse organization required strategic thinking and adaptability. One of the main challenges was ensuring effective communication across all levels of the Legion. To address this, we implemented regular meetings, newsletters and an updated digital platform, allowing for seamless communication and engagement.

Despite the hurdles, the triumphs were plentiful. Witnessing the positive impact of our programs on veterans' lives, seeing the community come together in support, and experiencing the growth and resilience of our Legion family were incredibly rewarding. These triumphs underscored the significance of our collective efforts and reinforced my belief in the power of community and service.

As my tenure comes to an end, I am optimistic about the future of The American Legion. The foundation we have built over the past two years is strong, and the momentum we have gained will propel us forward.



## 3rd District

Joe Tappainer



April is here and now we get to play with weather dice! Will it rain or will it snow? Will the temps be high or low?

As a district we are sitting right at 90 percent, we need to be at 95 percent by April 9. We can do this! We are in fourth place, but the distance between first and fourth place is so very close. Put the pedal to the metal and pour it on!

The first thing everyone needs to do is call our members who have not renewed for 2025! We also need to call the 1982s & 1982ADs and encourage them to transfer to a local post. I hope that many of you have got to see and spend some time with the national commander.

I would encourage each of you to get out of your post and attend the Department Fall Conference or the district and department conventions. Attend

one and see what the Legion is like outside of your post.

I would challenge each of you to take the online "Basic Training" course located on the National American Legion website, which is free to everyone. This course teaches our history and what we stand for. The Legion is so much more than a bar and a restaurant.

Consider running for a district or department office. I was a post person, but one weekend Carla and I attended a department conference. In two days, we made so many friends and learned more about the Legion and the ways we could volunteer!

Be brave and get out and meet new people! *Happy Easter! God is risen! He is risen indeed!*



## 6th District

Frank Grittner



Greetings from the Big 6th District.

This is the time of year where we are busy doing the business of The American Legion. This is also the time of year when we say thank you to those who have stepped up and taken on the mantle of leadership in our American Legion Family.

Commander Carl Moon's testimonial dinner in Walker was really a great time. We had some great entertainment, saw many old friends, made new friends, and we might have slightly roasted the commander!

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at the many testimonials, conventions, and other events happening around the department and especially the Big 6th District.

Let's not forget to get in all the reports that are coming due. We need to get this information into national and department because this is how we show our lawmakers the impact we are having within our communities. No post should say that they aren't doing anything, remember that 25 cents out of every membership goes toward the Emergency Relief Fund, and that can

be reported on the CPR. So please make sure we fill out, and turn in, the reports on time.

And let's not forget, we still have work to do on membership. I have been asked why we push membership so hard. It is membership that speaks the loudest to our government leaders at all levels.

Whether it is a town board meeting, or our national leadership testifying in Washington, membership is the biggest hammer we can wield. There is not a politician out there that wants millions of veterans and their families angry at them. When people say, "I don't really have the time to be active," you can tell them that just by being a member of the Legion, they are active.

Because when they are on our roles as a member, they represent all of their brother and sister veterans when we fight for the benefits we have earned.

Until next time, stay safe, and "Be the One" because *together we can* do wonderful things.



## 7th District

Carl Wilson



Greetings from the 7th District.

I think I can finally say that spring has come to the 7th District, and it is now time to start sending all those forms into the department and to the committee chairmen for the year.

The 7th District has now hit the 90 percent mark for membership and continues to get more veterans signed up with the Legion. Now is the time of the year that all the districts in Minnesota are planning to hold their district convention and elect new leadership for the upcoming year. The 7th District had planned on having our district convention in Echo this year but due to some scheduling issues

we had to move it to Elbow Lake and will be hosted by Argonne Forrest Post 278, Brandon.

Our convention will still be on May 17. I would like to also tell everyone that the 7th Districts Junior Shooting Program is going well and growing. The 7th District does only have one team that is supported by Brandon Post 278, and they have participated in the Minnesota American Legion State Match last month and did well considering it was their first match ever. We should see good things out of them next year.



## 8th District

Gene Swanson



Greetings from "The Eighth."

Now that winter is finally just about over, we need to look to our membership totals. We can do buddy checks and call members who have not renewed their membership. All it takes is a little time on the part of our officers and members to call a few people and give a little reminder to improve our membership numbers. This is also a good time to make contact with members we have not seen over the winter. We want to "Be the One" to make calls where it will make a difference.

We are in the period where we are electing new post officers for the new year and encourage officers to be more involved in our district. We need more attendance at our district meetings

to support the programs that we sponsor. Our baseball is going great and it is good to see fastpitch softball expanding.

We need to keep up our awareness of reports and activities that must be submitted to the department as things pick up in the spring and summer. I hope our people had a chance to attend Veterans Day on the Hill, as it gives us the opportunity to connect with elected officials to express our concerns.

Let us work on the four pillars of The American Legion and increase our membership. God bless the American Legion Family.



Dan Morgan/North End Post 474

"We are either the last outpost or the first listening post."



## 9th District

Steve NaSalle



Hello, Roaring 9th District American Legion Family!

I would like to start with a big congratulations to our 9th District posts that have reached or exceeded their 100 percent membership goal. Excellent job!

We still have a lot of work to do, so keep up the great work. We still have some posts out there that have not yet reached the 95 percent mark, so please continue to reach out to your post members to renew their memberships.

In addition, everyone has been sent their 1982 lists, so let's reach out and let them know why it's a great idea to be assigned to your post. This is a slow time of the year for membership, so if your post needs assistance with your revitalization efforts, both the district and department are here to help. Please don't hesitate to contact us for help. This is a team effort.

I would like to take this opportunity to Congratulate Jeremy Clovning as our 9th District Vice Commander of the Year. This is the second time Clovning has won this prestigious award, and the 9th District is very grateful to have a hard-working volunteer like yourself. Excellent job,

Jeremy!

Remember, our 9th District Convention is scheduled for June 7, at East Grand Forks Post 157, so please visit our 9th District Facebook page or our 9th District newsletter for updates.

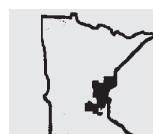
In the past, the District Convention numbers have been decreasing. I would like to see this change this year. There is a lot of shared information, and updates at our conventions, so please show your support by attending these events.

After all, our conventions are for all our posts in our district, not just a few. Come and show your support!

As always, please continue to be mindful of our members who are homebound or in assisted living facilities and remember our buddy checks.

"Caring for veterans shouldn't be a partisan issue. It should be an American one" — Jennifer Granholm

*Respectfully in your service.*



## 10th District

Kristy Janigo



March was a busy month. Shout-out to Connie Herzog for being recognized as 10th District Vice Commander of the Year at the Appreciation Rally at Chanhassen Post 580 March 8.

Congratulations to Mark Himmer for winning the 10th District Commander's Trophy Competition at Bill's Gun Shop March 15. The 10th District Chili Cook-Off was held March 23 at Hopkins Post 320. Thank you to everyone who made chili. It was delicious! Special thanks to Matt Beren, who played key roles in organizing both the pistol competition and the chili cook-off.

Are you coming to the 10th District Family Testimonial on May 31? Social hour is 5:30 p.m., with dinner at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$25 per person for dinner - pork loin, potato, vegetable, roll and salad. Payments can be sent to Osseo-Maple Grove Legion

Post 172 c/o Carley Lynch. RSVP to marketing@legion-

post172.org if you plan to pay on site. Thank you to Post Commander Jacob Lynch for generously hosting our joint testimonial!

Veterans Day on the Hill was April 9 on capital campus from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. I spoke on some of department's legislative priorities, especially HF1855 and SF1894 to protect Minnesota veterans from claim sharks. We encourage members of The American Legion family to set up individual meetings with your state representatives and senators to discuss our platform which can be found at mnlegion.org/legislation.

*In service.*





# The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 25 Vol. 7

President Judy Ackerman • Secretary Christie Avant, christie@mnala.org

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

651-224-7634

May 2025

## Seniors could learn fun from the juniors

April is here, and soon May will be upon us.

April means annual reports for the American Legion Auxiliary. Please make sure your unit filled out the impact report with the volunteer hours and dollar amounts that are requested on the report form. If you have pictures of any events, please include them as an attachment to your report. Wouldn't it be great to see your unit featured on the big screen at Department Convention?

The Department Junior Conference was held in Anoka on April 11 and 12. The 10th District worked hard to make the Friday night fun night just that — fun.

Our juniors have been working hard doing a lot in their districts and units. (We seniors might learn a thing or two from these young leaders.) It was a great weekend. I was honored to install my granddaughter Anastasia Donnelly, Northrop Unit

### President's Message

Judy Ackerman



522, District 2 as the 2025-2026 honorary junior department president.

Thank you to the leadership chairman, Carol Kottom; the presenters, Norma Tramm, Patti Gunderson, Darlene Wondra, Denise Milton, Ashley Kupe-rus, Mary Kuperus and Anastasia Donnelly, and to all the attendees at the three leadership workshops. I was able to stop in at the last one held in New Ulm.

Great job by everyone. Thank you so much.

April is Children & Youth Month. What is your unit planning to do to emphasize this in your community? April 15 was Purple Up for our military kids. Hopefully you all wore your purple.

Veterans Day on the Hill was held on April 9. It was a

privilege to once again be a part of this event and to support our veterans.

Please send any pictures or articles from the unit visits to me at 924 Shoreacres Dr., Fairmont, MN 56031.

Remember May 1 is the date to RSVP for the President's Testimonial Dinner.

*Judy Ackerman of Northrop Unit 522 is the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota. Her theme is "Back to the Basics: Recognize, Respect, Remember."*



**The Aitkin High School Life Skills group has been putting poppies together since the end of January. Instructor Kelly Klein's father is a Korean War veteran and when she heard about the poppy-making program, she asked whether her group of about 10 could try it. They are doing a great job, and they have completed about 900 for Aitkin Unit 86. The unit really appreciates all their help with this project!**

## Are we ready for Nat'l Poppy Day?

By Lorinda Kies  
Poppy Chairman

This has been a year of learning more about the memorial flower, the poppy. In World War I the poppy came to symbolize the bloodshed by those who fought and those who continue to fight for our country.

The poppy became the memorial flower of The American Legion on Sept. 27, 1920, in Cleveland.

Poppy Day is celebrated in countries around the world. In 2017, The American Legion brought National Poppy Day to the United States by asking Congress to designate the Friday before Memorial Day as National Poppy Day. That is how it officially became that day. The National Poppy Day is the Friday before Memorial Day.

Does your unit have plans for Memorial Day? To honor the fallen? Remember: Poppies

are not sold by volunteers, they are distributed.

Ask them if they would like to wear a poppy, if asked what they cost tell them nothing it is a way to honor the fallen. We are more than willing to take any donations offered.

Identify a specific purpose for which you are collecting your poppy money. For example, maybe you want to make \$1,500 for Honor Flights so more veterans and their helpers can attend. Plan to set up a card table in a busy area, or have a smaller table to hold poppies, your collection container and maybe a few coloring pages from the poppy coloring book.

When you are distributing poppies, have fun, be joyful and be branded. You are representing the American Legion Family when you are out in the public.

Have support materials to share. These could include the poppy coloring book, decorating your poppy collection container

with poppies. Bring along membership brochures in case you meet someone who wants to join.

Be aware, know where the other units in your area will be, you don't want to be in the same area as other areas could get missed.

Don't forget to have your SAL members and post members to help, you won't believe how much money those little SAL members can bring in.

Be sure to document your activities and share with ALA National Headquarters. Tell them your plans, send pictures and then make plans for the next year. Work with your public relations chairman, teamwork is the key to success.

The National American Legion Auxiliary website offers a variety of resources to assist you.

Have fun promoting National Poppy Day. I can't wait to hear all about your unit's adventures.

## OPEN POSITION: Department Treasurer

Resumes with cover letters are being accepted for the position of Department Treasurer for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota. Persons who are interested must be an American Legion Auxiliary member or eligible to join.

The Treasurer performs a variety of accounting tasks, applying accepted procedures to manage accounting and financial records, to produce financial records and reports and supports the Department Executive Secretary. This is a full-time position and is based in the St. Paul office on the third floor of the Veterans Service Building.

This position requires some weekend meetings and attendance at Fall Conference and Department Convention.

Applicants must have a degree in accounting or three years' equivalent experience, preferably in a nonprofit environment.

Resumes and cover letters should be sent to: Christie Avant, American Legion Auxiliary Department Headquarters 20 W 12th St., St. Paul, MN 55155 Or emailed to: christie@mnala.org.

A full job description is on the department webpage: [www.mnala.org](http://www.mnala.org).

This position is open until it is filled.

## Come to the 16th Junior Fun Weekend

**BRAINERD** — Make plans to have your Junior members attend the 16th annual Junior Fun Weekend, Friday thru Sunday, Aug. 8-10, 2025. Our Juniors will learn more about the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary, do some crafts, create a service project, work on one of the patches, learn flag etiquette, learn parliamentary procedure, make new friends and get re-acquainted with old friends. The Fun Weekend will be at the Legionville.

Safety Summer Camp (on North Long Lake, near Brainerd). The registration fee will be \$25

per person if reservations and payment are received in the Department Office no later than July 18, 2025. Late registrations will be \$30. The Fun Weekend is open to all Juniors and their advisors/chaperones. Everyone attending must pre-register and prepay. (We need an accurate count to plan meals and activities.) Senior members will be limited to one Senior member for every three Juniors unless space is available. If you have any questions, please contact the Department Office. Reservation forms are on the department webpage [www.mnala.org](http://www.mnala.org).

**2024-25 Honorary Department Junior President Teriana Richards presents a check for \$7,155 to Shawn Kor, executive director of Eagle's Healing Nest. Her project was to raise funds for the Lady Liberty House at the Nest. An additional \$3,900 was donated to the Junior project during the conference that will be forwarded to Kor.**



## DEPARTMENT CONVENTION POPPY CONTESTS

### CONTEST 1: Bouquet in a Vase

The bouquet will be in a vase made up of small or large poppies along with any other greenery. Using whatever theme you would like.

### CONTEST 2: Wall Hanging

The wall hanging must use President Judy Ackerman's theme: "Back to Basics-Recognize, Respect, Remember" Also somehow using her symbol of blocks to look like "Flanders Field."

All contests are open to all Auxiliary members. You do need to have a poppy of some sort in your entry, but you do not have to use the ALA poppy. All entries must include an attached sealed envelope with a card inside that states your name, unit number and unit location. If using ALA poppies, remember to remove the white tags. Small or large poppies may be used. Voting for the People's Choice will be by donation, with the funds going to the Department President's Project. Those who choose to donate their entries may do so. Remember to attach the sealed envelope with card inside to your entry. All entries will be given a number for voting.

## In Honor of Memorial Day

By ALA Department of Minnesota

We remember the many brave men and women who have given their lives through the history of our country to protect us from danger and harm.

We remember all those who sustained injury in mind and/or body in the course of their service.

We salute all those who served and presently serve in the military.





Here are the 2025-26 honorary junior officers: In back from left are Secretary Rylee Wolbeck, 2nd Vice President Chloe Carter, President Anastasia Donnelly and 1st Vice President Abigail Koltes. In front are Sergeant-at-Arms Regan McElroy, Chaplain Brooklyn Mahoney, Treasurer Lauren Lampman and Historian Katelyne Walker.

## Department Junior Conference was fun

By Jean Walker  
Junior Activities Chairman

The American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota 61st Annual Department Junior Conference was held on Saturday, April 12, hosted by the 10th District at the Anoka Post 102. Honorary Department Junior President Teriana Richards did an outstanding job of running the conference.

There were 30 units represented with 34 Junior members and 60 senior members and American Legion Family guests for a total of 94 attendees. The juniors had a fun Friday evening with great food and lots of fun at the Carnival themed activities thanks to the 10th District and Anoka Unit 102.

Junior members had the opportunity to participate in three poppy contests. It was hard to choose the winners because we had so many awesome entries.

### POPPY JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES CONTEST

- Class I: 1st Place Daisy Welter, Stewartville Unit 164, District 1  
2nd Place Hazel Mertens, Kimball Unit 261, District 6  
Class II: 1st Place Lilly Quaife, Argyle Unit 353, District 9  
2nd Place Peyton Ferguson-Stuart, Argyle Unit 353, District 9  
Class III: 1st Place Anita Mertens-Maxson, Kimball Unit 261, District 6  
2nd Place Mattea Efta, Argyle Unit 353, District 9

### POPPY CORSAGE/BUTTONNIERE CONTEST

- Class I: 1st Place Hazel Mertens, Kimball Unit 261, District 6  
2nd Place Harley Nelson, Argyle Unit 353, District 9  
Class II: 1st Place Piper Dragan, Kimball Unit 261, District 6  
2nd Place Amber Mertens, Kimball Unit 261, District 6  
Class III: 1st Place Brooke Miller, Warren Unit 27, District 9  
2nd Place Markelle Pederson, Warren Unit 27, District 9

### POPPY MEMORIAL DAY WREATH

- Class I: 1st Place Daisy Welter, Stewartville Unit 164, District 1  
2nd Place Hazel Mertens, Kimball Unit 261, District 6  
Class II: 1st Place Izzy Slovinski-Zipperer, Stewartville Unit 164, District 1  
2nd Place Miley Mahoney, Clinton Unit 258, District 7  
Class III: 1st Place Chloe Carter, Sanborn Unit 286, District 2  
2nd Place Brooke Mertens, Kimball Unit 261, District 6

### OFFICERS

2025-2026 officers were elected and installed by Department President Judy Ackerman. The newly elected Honorary Department Junior Officers are:

- Honorary President: Anastasia Donnelly, Northrop Unit 522, District 2  
Honorary 1st Vice Pres: Abigail Koltes, Melrose Unit 101, District 6  
Honorary 2nd Vice Pres: Chloe Carter, Sanborn Unit 286, District 2  
Honorary Secretary: Rylee Wolbeck, Brandon Unit 278, District 7  
Honorary Treasurer: Lauren Lampman, Northrop Unit 522, District 2  
Honorary Chaplain: Brooklyn Mahoney, Clinton Unit 258, District 7  
Honorary Historian: Katelyne Walker, Brandon Unit 278, District 7  
Honorary Sgt-at-Arms: Regan McElroy, LeRoy Unit 161, District 1  
Minnesota's Official Delegate to the NW Division National Junior Meeting is Anastasia Donnelly, Northrop Unit 522, District 2



Both Senior and Junior Auxiliary members entertain their guests during the American Legion Birthday Dinner held at Lamberton Post 41 in March. Department President Judy Ackerman was honored to have been a guest and the photographer.



The DEC met March 8 in Chanhassen and reviewed standing rules. The proposals will be presented at the 10 district conventions and voted upon at the Department Convention in Willmar in July.

## National Standings

Western Division	92.64% up from 91.96%
Eastern Division	92.20% up from 91.71%
Southern Division	92.05% up from 91.33%
Central Division	90.33% up from 89.80%
Northwestern Division	87.36% up from 86.93%

**AMERICAN  
LEGION  
AUXILIARY**

## Can Minnesota make the next goal?

By Hope Wilson  
Membership Chairman

What a ride! With your help, we nailed the March 15 national goal of 85 percent. It was a nail-biter for me, but you proved that Minnesota is indeed strong and mighty.

The next department goal is 95 percent membership by May 23 (Poppy Day). When I looked at our numbers on April 8, we were at 87.71 percent. This gives us just over six weeks to bring that number up 7.29 percent.

Minnesota has already shown me that its members and membership teams are *amazing* so I

### District Standings

1. 91.74%	District 6	6. 86.43%	District 7
2. 90.91%	District 3	7. 84.57%	District 8
3. 90.03%	District 1	8. 83.99%	District 10
4. 86.95%	District 2	9. 79.57%	District 4
5. 86.79%	District 9	10. 65.66%	District 5

know we can nail this goal as well.

With the upcoming holidays, I would like to challenge every member to talk to someone new at an event and find out if they have a veteran in their life. Let them know about the ALA and the wonderful things we do for

our veterans.

Invite them to an upcoming unit meeting or to an upcoming Memorial Day event. If they can see what we do and who we are, hopefully they will want to join.

Let them know we are a voice for spouses of veterans in St. Paul and D.C., too.



Fairmont Unit 36 members are pictured with Department President Judy Ackerman, center, Department Commander Carl Moon, white cap, and American Legion National Commander James A. LaCoursiere Jr., red cap, during the National Commander's Tour of Minnesota.

## Dept. convention is a great gathering

WILLMAR — Please join us at the 105th Department Convention being held July 10-12 at the Willmar Conference Center.

Prior to the Convention, the Department Executive Committee will meet at 12:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 9. Auxiliary district caucuses will take place on both Thursday and Friday mornings at 8:15 a.m. The convention sessions will begin at 9:15 a.m. Find the registration form on Page 3 of this issue of The Minnesota Legionnaire.

### Saturday, July 12

Convention Reconvenes at 9 a.m.

Election of 2025-26 Officers 10:45 a.m.

Installation of 2025-26 Officers 11:00 a.m.

### Candidates

The following members have been endorsed for Department office:

- Department President: Robin Dorf, Monticello Unit 260

• Department 1st Vice President: Linda Kelly, Pine Island Unit 184

• Department 2nd Vice President: Jody Hassing, Bloomington Unit 550

Nominations will be on Thursday morning. When there is more than one candidate nominated, elections will take place by balloting. There will also be nominations for delegates at-large to the National Convention.

### Tentative Convention Schedule Wednesday, July 9

Pre-Convention Dept. Executive Meeting 12:30 p.m.

### Thursday, July 10

District Caucuses (Auxiliary) 8:15 a.m.

Convention Session 9:15 a.m.

Joint Memorial Service 11:30 a.m.

Convention Committee Meetings (Auxiliary) 2 p.m.

### Friday, July 11

District Caucuses (Auxiliary) 8:15 a.m.

Convention Session 9:15 a.m.

Past Department Presidents Luncheon 11:30 a.m.

Convention Reconvenes 1:30 p.m.

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