



During the nomination parade at the 104th National Convention, Daniel Seehafer shakes hands with 5th District's Dennis DeLong and 10th District's Bill Gordon.

## Convention recharges the spirits

### Wisconsinite elected national commander

CHARLOTTE — Keni Thomas sang the national anthem at the start of the 104th American Legion National Convention.

Who is Keni Thomas? He is a country music singer and former Army Ranger who was part of Operation Restore Hope in Somalia and fought in the Battle of Mogadishu, a battle made well-known to Americans in the book and movie "Black Hawk Down."

Hawk Down."

Thomas said the original mission of the Rangers that day was a raid. It was done in 35 minutes and the truck was driving away, he said. It was then they got word that Super 61 crashed. The helicopter had been struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. Both pilots were killed and the two remaining crew were wounded and began to defend themselves from a mob.

"The mission changed," Thomas said. "You see it. You can't believe it is happening, but it is happening, and it's happening

to you. Then you can see it is happening to people left and right of you. What do you do?"

You fall back on your training. The first letter of each part of the Ranger Creed spells out R-A-N-G-E-R. The N line states: "Never shall I fail my comrades."

"When you say something over and over and over again, you tend to do it," Thomas said. "Who do you want to be in the moment?"

He said many people might look out for  
**Continued on Page 13**

## Dues increase is on the way

Resolution passed but then pulled for review over date issue

CHARLOTTE — The ruling body of The American Legion are the delegates at the National Convention. Under Article X of the National Constitution & By-Laws, for the National American Legion to increase its portion of the dues, it must be done at the National Convention.

And it was done at the 104th National Convention in Charlotte. However, there was a hangup with some language over the start date.

Minnesota National Executive Committeeman Bill Barbknecht of Underwood Post 489 said that language is to be fixed at the National Executive Committee's meeting Oct. 11-12, and the dues increase will be announced.

American Legion dues are split among different levels of the Legion.

**Continued on Page 12**

## Airborne Ranger

Cross transitioned from war to civilian life via public service

By Tim Engstrom

CHARLOTTE — In the late 1960s, the military was taking 5,000 men per month in Minnesota alone. It was the height of the Vietnam War.

Rick Cross is 74 these days, and back then, at 18, he graduated from Osseo High School. It was 1967. After, he attended the University of Minnesota part-time and worked a factory job a couple of years. The draft was a regular part of life. Young men awaited their notices in the mailbox.

"We all knew we were going. It was just a matter of when and where," Cross said.

In 1969, he signed up to be a Navy medic with a classmate on the buddy program. They passed the physical test, but his buddy couldn't pass the written test to be a medic.

So much for joining.

Two weeks later, the Army drafted him and used the Navy tests.

Cross wanted to be a mechanic, but that required an extra year, so he ended up an 11B infantryman.

Basic was at Fort Bragg, N.C. During the second week of basic, the base commander, a one-star general, summoned Cross. None of the brass or drill sergeants knew why.



Rick Cross of Melrose Post 101 in the 6th District sits with his arm around his bride, Sharon Cross, at the National Commander's Banquet in Charlotte during the 104th National Convention in August. She is the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota. They found each other through attending American Legion Family events. She is with Bemidji Unit 14.

Cross walked in, saluted and reported. The brigadier general, it turned out, was a cousin. Cross' mom had called the general to find out how her son was doing.

"The drill sergeant found out I was related to the base commander. I pulled KP throughout basic," Cross said.

After advanced infantry training at Fort McClellan, Ala., Cross finally got to go home and see his mother. He said:

"Please don't do that again."

The men were being fast-tracked into regular duty. Basic was six weeks. AIT six weeks. Cross agreed to attend Airborne school and Ranger school.

"Recruiters said, 'If you are not Airborne, then you are not nothing.'"

Jump school was three weeks; Ranger four. He had two weeks off,

then it was off to Vietnam. There, he spent a week at Snake School, where soldiers are taught to survive in jungle. Then he was sent to the HQ of the 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment "Rangers." HQ was assigned to B Company. In Vietnam, the 16th served with the 1st Infantry Division — the Big Red One.

His platoon, always short on  
**Continued on Page 14**

## \$32 million Minn. Military & Veterans Museum breaks ground



Ret. Gen. Joseph Votel speaks at the groundbreaking for the Minnesota Military & Veterans Museum north of Little Falls on Sept. 17.

CAMP RIPLEY — With about 300 people in attendance and a World War II-era Navy bulldozer at the ready, the Minnesota Military & Veterans Museum broke ground Sept. 17 on its new site outside of Camp Ripley.

The new \$32 million museum structure will have 40,000 square feet of space on a 30-acre parcel along Minnesota Highway 371, east of the Little Falls State Veterans Cemetery, which itself is just east of Camp Ripley.

After a color guard comprising members of various veteran service organizations presented the colors, Brig. Gen. Lowell Kruse, assistant adjutant general of the Minnesota National Guard, said, "Those are the individuals we are highlighting in this museum."

Kruse said the state of Minnesota founded Camp Ripley in 1929, named for the federal frontier installation Fort Ripley that had closed in 1877.

The Works Project Administration, between 1934 and 1942, constructed a 3,400-foot rock wall marking the cantonment's main gate and south side. Kruse said this wall became the signature of Camp Ripley. The base was expanded in 1951 to 45,000 acres, and over time, it has crept up to its present 53,000 acres.

The 169-acre Little Falls State Veterans Cemetery opened in June 1994, with a similar-looking rock wall.

Kruse said the new museum, just like what happened with the cemetery, "will  
**Continued on Page 17**

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# Legionnaires don't have to pay to file VA claims

## VA & Rehabilitation

**Ray Kane**



Veterans have dedicated their lives to defending our country, and ensuring they receive the benefits they rightfully deserve is a duty we all share.

Unfortunately, some individuals exploit veterans' lack of familiarity with the claims process by charging exorbitant fees for assistance.

In Minnesota, veterans have a remarkable advantage with organizations like The American Legion and County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) committed to guiding them through the claims process without financial burden. This article highlights the importance of avoiding predatory practices and utilizing the resources available to veterans in Minnesota.

The sacrifices veterans make for their nation are immeasurable, and they should never be taken advantage of. In some cases, unscrupulous individuals or organizations target veterans by charging unnecessary fees for assistance with their claims. To protect their rights and finances, veterans should be aware of the legitimate resources available to them.

The American Legion, in collaboration with CVSOs, offers veterans a potent shield against predatory practices. When veterans designate The American Legion as their power of attorney, they gain access to a network of experts who are dedicated to helping them navigate the claims process. This partnership empowers veterans to receive their rightfully earned benefits without incurring additional costs.

CVSOs are dedicated local representatives who specialize in assisting veterans with their claims. These professionals are well-versed in the intricacies of the claims process and are continuously trained to provide accurate guidance. Their knowledge of state and federal benefits ensures that veterans receive personalized support tailored to their unique circumstances, all at no expense to the veterans.

The Minnesota Department of

Veterans Affairs is another a key player in ensuring veterans' benefits are secured. By The American Legion Department of Minnesota collaborating with MDVA, Bergmann & Moore (your claim attorneys), veterans can access vital resources that provide guidance, information and support throughout the claims process. The department's commitment to veterans' well-being ensures a smoother and more efficient claims experience.

Minnesota stands out by offering veterans an exceptional opportunity through the Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers. This organization continuously educates, trains and develops its members to stay updated on the latest developments in the field. Through on-the-job training classes, expert

mentors and dedicated claims representatives, veterans can rest assured that their claims are in capable hands.

Veterans should never have to worry about predators seeking to exploit their claims for financial gain. In Minnesota, veterans are fortunate to have resources like The American Legion, CVSOs, and MDVA, which are all committed to supporting them throughout the claims process.

By tapping into these expert networks, veterans can ensure their benefits are secured without unnecessary costs. Minnesota's dedication to its veterans is further exemplified through the Coalition of Veterans Service Officers, guaranteeing that veterans receive the best assistance possible. With these resources at their disposal, veterans can confidently navigate the claims process, knowing that their rights and well-being are being safeguarded.

Call your CVSO to start your claim.

*Ray Kane of Hastings Post 47 is the service officer for the Department of Minnesota.*

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# Minnesota members are a family united by service

By Ray Kane  
Department Service Officer

In a world that seems to change by the minute, some things remain constant and unyielding. The bonds forged in service to our nation, the values that guide us and the kinship we

share as veterans and members of The American Legion are among those unwavering constants. In Minnesota, Legionnaires have long embraced the idea that we are not merely an organization; we are a family.

The world may evolve, but we don't have to. In a rapidly shifting landscape, where screens have replaced smiles, and likes have replaced handshakes, the values instilled in us during our service continue to shine brightly. We, the veterans of Minnesota, have chosen to lead the way in kindness, to say hi as we walk by and to uplift our sisters and brothers, even when life's burdens weigh heavy on their shoulders.

In the heart of every Minnesota Legionnaire lies a profound commitment to show grace and to assume positive intent before leaping to conclusions.

Our shared mission unites us, and it is a mission we hold dear: to serve our fellow veterans, our communities, and our nation. It's a mission that transcends the differences that may divide us in the outside world, reminding

us that, deep down, we all have the same purpose — to make the world a better place.

In times of crisis, when veterans among us are facing hardship or when our communities are in need, it's the Legionnaires who step up without hesitation. We don't wait for someone else to take the lead; we take the initiative to bring hope and healing. It's not just a duty; it's a calling — a calling to be there for one another like family.

But the idea of being a family goes beyond mere actions. It's a state of mind, a way of seeing the world. It's the belief that we are all in this together, and by treating one another as family, we strengthen the bonds that make us unstoppable.

As a family, we welcome newcomers with open arms. We remember the day we first walked through those Legion doors — the mixture of anticipation and camaraderie that embraced us. Now, it's our turn to extend that same warmth to those who are looking for a place to belong. BE THE ONE to reach out and ask other veterans to join our

family. Let them know they're not alone, that they have brothers and sisters who will stand by their side through thick and thin.

When we say we would do anything for our family, we mean it. We've faced challenges together, celebrated victories side by side, and carried the weight of loss as a collective burden. Our Legion family has stood with us through it all, and that unwavering support is a testament to the strength of our bonds.

So, to every Minnesota Legionnaire, remember this: In a world that sometimes feels fractured and distant, we have the power to be a beacon of unity and kindness. We can lead by example, showing the world that our family values endure. Reach out, say hi, lend a hand and keep welcoming new members into our fold.

In the Minnesota American Legion, we don't just serve; we serve as one big, diverse and loving family. Together, we are a force for good, and, together, there's nothing we can't accomplish. After all, we're not just Legionnaires; we're family.

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# Fall Conference to have many breakout sessions

## Keynote speaker is from Attorney General's Office

ST. CLOUD — The 2023 Fall Conference Oct. 27-28 at the River's Edge Conference Center and Best Western Kelly Inn is shaping up to be an engaging affair.

The format of breakout sessions on Friday of the conference was popular last year and continues this year.

"We like this format a lot," said Past National Vice Commander Al Davis, treasurer for the Convention Corp. that organizes the event. "It's more engaging than sitting in a single room all day. We get to hear various speakers of our choosing and move from session to session if we like."

Department Membership Director Pam Krill will teach one on MyLegion.org.

Past Department Chaplain Kelley Adelman will give a session on "Be the One."

Joe Tappiner of Apple Valley Post 1776 speaks on "I'm a New Officer, Now What Do I Do?"

Department Service Officer Ray Kane and Assistant Department Service Officer Janet Lorenzo will lead a session on "Post Service Officer Responsibilities."

Past Department Membership Director Linda Dvorak will lead a session on Consolidated Post Reports.

Past 3rd District Director Gary Richardson and Past Department Commander Mike Ash will instruct on post and district engagement.

A session on the Minnesota Suicide Prevention Awareness Coalition will be led by Andrea Perry and Laura Stomvoll of the



Al Davis

Minneapolis VA.

Department Legislative Chairwoman Kristy Janigo will host a session titled "Legislative Initiatives & Involvement."

Lac qui Parle County Veteran Service Officer Josh Beninga is to speak on the duties of a county veteran service officer.

Department Judge Advocate Greg Colby will instruct on legal issues at the post level.

A full schedule is printed on Page 9 of this issue.

Registration starts at noon Thursday, Oct. 26, in the lobby of the Best Western Kelly Inn in downtown St. Cloud.

The deadline for registering in advance is Oct. 14. The registration fee is \$15, but, after Oct. 14, it jumps to \$25.

Registering online is \$15 plus a \$2.85 service fee and is available until noon Oct. 25. Register online by going to mnlegion.org, then hover over "Events" and select "Fall Conference."

Participants can eat at restaurants or at the catered meals or a mix of both. The catered meals are \$15 each. The meals are breakfasts on Friday and Saturday and a lunch on Friday. Please indicate with your check which meals you desire. The deadline is Oct. 12. Meals are available to purchase at mnlegion.org until Oct. 12.

"This way, we can tell the caterer how many meals to provide," Davis said.

The keynote speaker is Mohamed Sabur, an attorney with the Minnesota Attorney General's Office Charities Division. He will speak on "Duty of Corporate Officers."

The American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota will host the Grand March at 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 27 (with lineup at 6:30 p.m.) The dress code is Country Western, with boots, cowboy hat and a relaxed feel. A reception follows.

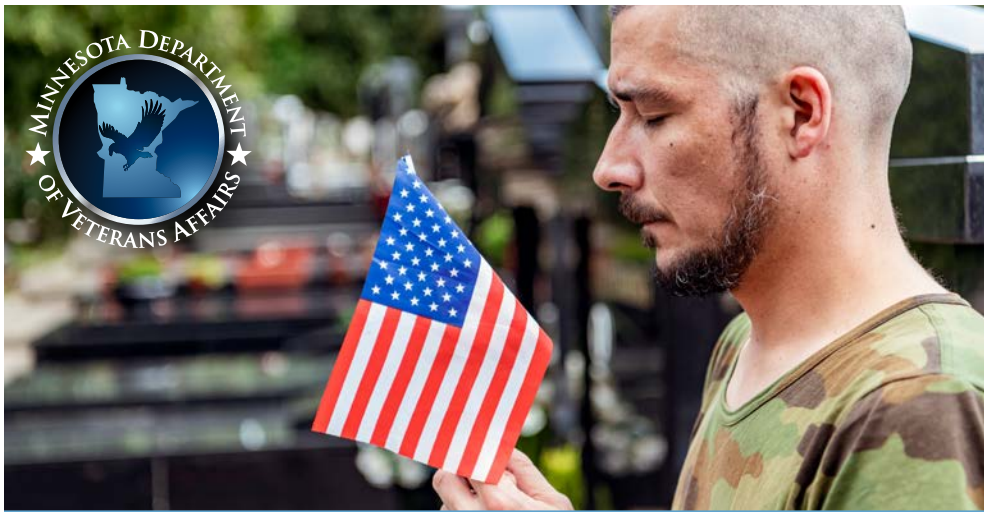
More about the Auxiliary's big Annual Silent Action and other activities are printed in the Auxiliary Bulletin portion of this issue.

The Department Executive Committee is slated to meet at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 26, in the Sundwood Room of the Best Western Kelly Inn. It is the evening before the Fall Conference starts. There will be committee meetings at 4 p.m., too.

On Saturday, Oct. 28, the conference meets in a general session, with reports on the Convention Committees, the Department of Minnesota budget process, the 2024 National Convention delegates, Fund 85 applications and coming changes to The Minnesota Legionnaire.

The Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Minnesota meet in general session 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Oct. 28. The Minnesota American Legion Riders meet 1 to 3 p.m. Oct. 28.

"The best part is seeing the friendly faces of veterans and their supporters," Davis said.



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Paul Bunyan Park  
Paul Bunyan Drive/Hwy 197 (Old Hwy 2)

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**10 a.m.** Program

» Event Details

**For more information, email:**  
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## 2023 Fall Conference Official Registration

**Mail to:**

Minnesota American Legion Convention Corp.  
P.O. Box 166  
Princeton, MN 55371

**Registration sliding fee:**

Registration received by Oct. 14: \$15  
Registration at mnlegion.org: \$15 + \$2.85 service fee  
(Online registration is available until noon Oct. 25)  
Registration at the door: \$25

Only the pre-registered will receive a booklet.

Registration fees are for each person attending, except for Junior SAL and Junior Auxiliary members. Please copy and send a separate form for each person attending. Everyone must pay the registration fee.

Checks only by mail; bank cards are accepted online. Please indicate "Fall Conference" on the memo line.

Please make checks payable to:  
**Minnesota American Legion Convention Corp.**

**Conference dates:**

Oct. 27-28, 2023  
Various committees meet Oct. 26.

**Contact the hotel directly for your reservations:**

Headquarters hotel:  
Best Western Plus Kelly Inn, St. Cloud  
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**Meals:** Pre-purchased meals are available for \$15 each. The meals are breakfasts on Friday and Saturday and a lunch on Friday. Please indicate with your check which meals you desire. The deadline is Oct. 12. Meals are available to purchase at mnlegion.org until then, too.

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# Let's get many of you to Fall Conference

Hello, American Legion Family.

Is it me or do the summer months seem to fly by faster than the winter months? It seems like yesterday that it was time to turn in an article.

Speaking of articles, I want to thank Tim Engstrom for the great work that he does for the whole American Legion Family — not only on the Legionnaire publication, but all the work he does. I don't think our family really knows the extent of the work the department staff do to make things run smoothly. Mike Maxa, Jennifer Kelley, Misty Padilla, Rachael Hill and Tim Engstrom do so much more than most of us realize.

It has been another very busy month. I haven't had very much time on the motorcycle, or on the golf course, this summer, but it has been worth it. Getting around to the different events and seeing the hard work of our Legion Family volunteers is truly amazing.

I know I say that a lot, but it is true. We have a great family, and we need to spread that word more.

If every veteran and family member in Minnesota knew how great we are, and the programs we have, they would be knocking on our doors, and our phones would be blowing up with veterans wanting to join our family. We all just need to go against most of our natures and start bragging about the great things we do for our fellow

## Commander's Column

Paul Hassing



veterans, their families and our communities.

The 104th American Legion National Convention was held in Charlotte this year. It started off a little shaky with some of our flights being delayed up to six hours. It turned out to be a great convention, though, and I even learned some things.

Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

Some of us went on a ghost tour of Charlotte. We didn't see any ghosts, but there was an Elvis sighting. (If you haven't heard, ask someone who went to the States Dinner. If everything falls into place, he might show up in Minnesota.)

I had the honor of being elected vice chairman for the Commanders' Task Force (CTF) this year. The CTF is made up of the commanders of eight congressionally chartered veteran organizations in Minnesota. (There used to be nine, but the Vietnam Veterans of America shuttered its department level a couple of years ago.)

We had a great summit at Camp Ripley that brought in some great presenters who taught me a lot of things about our benefits in Minnesota, some of the legislative actions that we are looking at, and what we can do moving forward. We have a

lot of work to do, but I know we can get it done.

It looks like its going to be another busy month ahead, and we are capping it off with our annual Fall Conference in St. Cloud.

This conference is about learning. I would like to see as many of you there as possible. It is a great opportunity to learn some things and get to know other Legionnaires from around the state. This conference is open to all Legionnaires. You do not need to be a delegate, or elected official, or chief cook and bottle washer to attend.

Do not let anyone tell you that only certain people can go. Some people like to gain knowledge and hold on to it. If we are to grow, we need to spread the knowledge we have. If you would like to attend, and are not sure what you need to do, please contact your district leadership for the details or find them in the pages of this issue of The Minnesota Legionnaire.

The details also are found at [mnlegion.org](http://mnlegion.org). If you need help, give me a call at 612-598-0419.

In closing, I would like to ask all of you to be kind to each other. We are all working very hard. Sometimes people do things differently than you, it doesn't mean you have to be mean about it.

We can get a lot more done by communicating effectively and having a little empathy. If you have a better way of doing something, speak up. Let someone know. Everyone is trying their best.

If you can help, help. Otherwise please don't cut them down behind their back. That's not fair and it doesn't help anyone. It only makes good people stay home. We are too great of an organization, and we have a lot of things to get done on the road ahead. Thank you and hope to see you all soon.

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

# What does it mean to be a chaplain?

Chaplain as defined in the Oxford Dictionary is a member of the clergy assigned to a private chapel, institution, ship or a branch of any country's armed forces.

The American Legion elects a chaplain on a yearly basis and the Officer's Manual defines the chaplain position as a member who is not necessarily a member of the clergy, but must be a member capable of moral and intellectual leadership and one who gives dignity and respect to the office.

The chaplain should be in close contact with the commander and other post officers, and should attend all meetings of the post executive committee. The chaplain should work with the post historian in regard to where the graves of American Legion members and veterans are buried and should be involved in post Memorial Day activities.

The chaplain also needs to make themselves available to the needs of family members who are bereaved during the time of loss.

The chaplaincy has many purposes. One of its major purposes is to help people grow in their relationship with God and with one another. Also, we serve as a remainder of the transcendent and seek to develop an environment within which Legionnaires are encouraged

in their personal moral and spiritual growth. We are to remind all Americans that God is the source of all rights and privileges.

The American Legion is comprehensive in nature embracing all religions, faiths and denominations within its ranks. The chaplaincy being nondenominational (open or acceptance to people of any Christian denomination) and non-sectarian (not involving or rotating to a specific sect or religious group) wishes to minister to the spiritual needs of all without regard to either affiliation or non-affiliation.

Chaplains should seek to minister to people where ever there is a need. For many, the chaplain may be the only source of ministry they will ever know, as they have no affiliation with a church, synagogue or other religious institution.

The role of the chaplain is ever-increasing within The American Legion because of the aging of our membership. The chaplain should be notified when there is a death, illness or special concern within the membership so he or she can at that time provide any spiritual

words of comfort at that time.

It is the responsibility of the chaplain to ensure that the moral and spiritual needs of all members are taken into consideration and attended to in every way.

In the words of President William Howard Taft: "The cornerstone of modern civilization must continue to be religion and morality."

Events to keep in our thoughts and prayers during the month of October are:

Columbus Day on the second day of the month.

Ramadan for the entire month for fasting and prayer for the Muslim faith.

*Inspire us, O Lord, to continue to seek peace in our world from a position of strength, justice and compassion. May we ever be ready to serve You our God. And our nation. We pray in your holy name, Amen.*

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

## Chaplain's Corner

Dean Knutson



Elvis and a bobby-soxer in a poodle skirt were spotted at the Auxiliary States Dinner on Aug. 29 in Charlotte. (Psst. They actually are Paul and Jody Hassing.)

## Mail Call

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

### 2nd District sees growth in Jr. Shooting Sports

The 2nd District of Minnesota saw growth in the 2023 American Legion Jr. Shooting Sports Program.

Redwood Falls Post 38 fielded a team for the 10th straight year. They had five participants, three boys and two girls.

Pipestone Post 6 started their first year with 12 participants, 11 boys and one girl. In addition to the American Legion Jr. Shooting Sports Round 1 Postal

Match, post teams participated in the Civilian Marksmanship Program Postal, Minnesota Air Gun Championships, and CMP ACES matches. The 2nd District was represented by a team with members from both posts in the Jr. Olympic State Championship held at Anoka American Legion Post 102 and hosted by the Minnesota Centershots.

The Pipestone and Redwood Falls posts are affiliated with their local 4-H programs. By affiliating with established Jr. Shooting Sports Programs, American Legion posts may have access to trained youth, certified coaches, Sporter Air Rifle equipment, supplies and

ranges.

Affiliated programs gain the opportunity to participate in American Legion programs as well as other competitive matches. Members of the Pipestone and Redwood Falls teams represented Minnesota at the 4-H National Championships on the .22 smallbore rifle team. They participated in NRA Hunter silhouette, CMP Sporter Rimfire and NRA 3 Position matches.

The 2nd District is looking forward to continued growth through an NRA Foundation grant of air rifles, ammunition and supplies. The Friends of NRA grant items will be available from Redwood Falls Post

38 on a lend/lease program for posts in the 2nd District unable to find affiliates or fund their own programs.

Currently there are six posts in the 2nd District interested

in starting Jr. Shooting Sports Programs in 2024.

More information on the American Legion Jr. Shooting Sports Program can be found at [legion.org/shooting](http://legion.org/shooting).

**Jerry Ludwig  
Chairman  
2nd District  
Jr. Shooting Sports**

## The Minnesota Legionnaire

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Official publication of  
The American Legion  
Department of Minnesota

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# Taps



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Name of Deceased	Age	Date of Death	Branch	Era	Cont. Years	Post
<b>Anderson, Robert S.</b>	76	8/24/23	Army	Vietnam	11	Marshall Post 113
<b>Angst, Don L.</b>	86	7/24/23	Army	Vietnam	16	Winona Post 9
Note: He was a squad leader in Vietnam.						
<b>Bassett, George N.</b>	97	7/23/23	Army AF	WWII	80	Blue Earth Post 89
Note: He was a nationally known sculptor, especially with bronze work. He created the bronze busts of Hubert Humphrey, Martin Luther King Jr. and Sigurd Olson at the Minnesota State Capitol.						
<b>Beck, Shirley M.</b>	81	8/8/23	Army	Vietnam	2	Winona Post 9
<b>Carlson, Glenn H.</b>	87	6/5/23	Navy	Korea	61	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
<b>Connelly, James W.</b>	85	9/2/23	Army	Vietnam	35	Le Center Post 108
<b>Cornelius, Kivden B.</b>	73	8/6/23	Navy	Vietnam	8	Eyota Post 551
Note: He was stationed in Long Beach, Calif., then served in Vietnam aboard the destroyer USS Lynde McCormick.						
<b>Davis, Raymond H.</b>	78	12/11/22	Army	Panama	37	Coon Rapids Post 334
<b>Dean, Ralph J.</b>	81	3/21/23	Army	Vietnam	44	Eyota Post 551
<b>Dorr, Luther J.</b>	81	9/17/23	Army	Vietnam	58	Princeton Post 216
Note: He served on the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Committee from 2018 to 2023 and was gambling manager for his post for many years. He spent three decades as editor of the Princeton Union-Eagle, including coverage of Post 216 Baseball. He is in the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame and the Minnesota Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame.						
<b>Douty, Joseph L.</b>	47	9/3/23	Army	GWOT	14	Pipestone Post 6
Note: He served with Battery Alpha, 1st Battalion, 125th Field Artillery Regiment, out of Pipestone in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He deployed again for Operation Iraqi Freedom with the Minnesota National Guard for 22 months, 16 of which were in a combat zone. This deployment is the longest in history for any unit of the National Guard. Later, he deployed as part of Operation New Dawn to Baghdad. He was among the last soldiers to leave Iraq.						
<b>Engle, Richard</b>	84	8/23/23	Army NG	Vietnam	40	Little Falls Post 46
<b>Frank, David E.</b>	82	8/4/23	Army NG	Vietnam	38	Blue Earth Post 89
Note: He served as the elected treasurer of Faribault County for 25 years.						
<b>Gall, Robert J.</b>	85	7/25/23	Army	Cold	55	Hillman Post 602
Note: He was a cook, and he was stationed in Washington state and Alaska.						
<b>Geiger, LeRoy H.</b>	85	8/25/23	Air Force	Cold	48	New Prague Post 45
Note: He served in England, Scotland and Libya. (Interestingly, Wheelus Air Base outside Tripoli was once the largest U.S. overseas base. In 1970, the base closed and was turned over to the Libyan government.)						
<b>Getz, Dennis L.</b>	67	8/12/23	Navy	Vietnam	44	Hutchinson Post 96
<b>Gronseth, James H.</b>	90	9/11/23	Army	Korea	58	Hayfield Post 330
Note: He served in the 34th Medical Battalion of the 27th Regiment, part of the 25th Infantry Division. His MASH was near the DMZ in Korea.						
<b>Hanson, Caren W.</b>	82	8/8/23	Army	Vietnam	7	Benson Post 62
<b>Hellman, Gerald M.</b>	78	7/23/23	Army	Vietnam	45	Monticello Post 260
<b>Heveron, Allan R.</b>	83	8/31/23	Army	Vietnam	10	Willmar Post 167
<b>Himmelspach, James J.</b>	84	7/26/23	Air Force	Cold	16	Raymond Post 420
<b>Jacobs, Charles D.</b>	85	9/5/23	Army	Cold	3	Waite Park Post 428
<b>Kasper, Charles E.</b>	88	9/2/23	Army	Korea	38	Montgomery Post 79
<b>Klaustermeier, Duane F.</b>	86	8/24/23	Navy	Vietnam	19	Glencoe Post 95
Note: Nicknamed "Dewey," he served as post finance officer and as a member of the honor guard.						
<b>Klein, Donald C.</b>	91	8/27/23	Army	Korea	54	Lake City Post 110
<b>Knaak, David D.</b>	77	7/28/23	Army	Vietnam	56	Lewisville Post 561
<b>Lanners, Henry C.</b>	93	8/14/23	Navy	Korea	69	Minneapolis Gopher Post 440
Note: He served aboard the USS William R. Rush. He was a radarman.						
<b>Livingston, Paul R.</b>	76	8/1/23	Marines	Vietnam	9	Porter Post 457
Note: He served two tours in Vietnam as a radio operator.						
<b>Livingston, William J.</b>	91	8/19/23	Army	WWII	69	Delano Post 377
Note: He served in artillery. His uniform is in the museum for Yellow Medicine County. (He previously belonged to other posts.) He is a past post commander. His father and son were also post commanders.						
<b>Long, Daniel G.</b>	91	2/20/23	Air Force	Korea/VN	51	Pillager Post 100
<b>Lorenz, Robert W.</b>	99	9/11/23	Navy	WWII	35	Anoka Post 102
<b>Malmgren, Timothy E.</b>	73	7/16/23	Army	Vietnam	19	Parkers Prairie Post 219
Note: He served as a military policeman.						
<b>Marcus, Calvin</b>	87	7/29/23	Army	Korea	6	Raymond Post 420
<b>Maxa, Emil J. "Max"</b>	83	9/2/23	Air Force	Vietnam	54	Montgomery Post 79
Note: He served as a parachute rigger at Fairchild AFB in Washington state.						
<b>Melkert, Kevin A.</b>	61	8/16/23	Army NG	Leb/Gren	16	Breckenridge Post 53
<b>Mueller, Larry A.</b>	79	9/12/23	unk.	Vietnam	11	Danube Post 227
<b>Novak, Mark A.</b>	74	8/24/23	Navy	Vietnam	13	Janesville Post 281
Note: He was a former mayor of Janesville.						
<b>Peka, Everett M.</b>	91	7/1/23	Army	Korea	57	Coon Rapids Post 334
<b>Peltier, Rodney R.</b>	94	2/28/23	Navy	Korea	36	Hugo Post 620
<b>Potuzak, Lumir J. "Pete"</b>	91	8/14/23	Marines	WWII	73	Foley Post 298
<b>Robinson, Ronald D.</b>	82	8/23/23	Marines	Vietnam	32	Springfield Post 257
Note: He was a past post commander.						
<b>Roessler, Thomas</b>	72	8/16/23	Army Res.	Vietnam	39	St. Peter Post 37
<b>Roloff, Norman C.</b>	102	8/13/23	Coast Guard	WWII	78	Winona Post 9
<b>Shaner, Dean M.</b>	78	8/17/23	Army	Vietnam	31	Storden Post 391
<b>Shelland, John D.</b>	94	9/19/23	Army	WWII	6	Rosetown Post 542
<b>Skare, Donald O.</b>	87	8/23/23	Marines	Vietnam	43	Willmar Post 167
<b>Smith, Cornelia L. "Connie"</b>	100	9/22/23	Army	WWII	24	Madison Post 158
Note: She served in the Army Nurse Corps with the 204th general hospital on Saipan and Guam.						
<b>Smith, Terry J. "Tar"</b>	77	9/3/23	Army	Vietnam	8	Wheaton Post 80
<b>Sorteberg, Robert M.</b>	93	6/20/23	Navy	Korea	39	Rosetown Post 542
Note: He is a past president of the St. Paul Clown Club and participated in the Twin Cities Honor Flight.						
<b>Stevens, Eugene C.</b>	unk.	9/26/22	unk.	Vietnam	44	Anoka Post 102
Note: He was a past commander and chaplain for Shakopee Post 2.						
<b>Sullivan, Leo J.</b>	90	7/20/23	Air Force	Korea	27	Springfield Post 257
<b>Sutherland, William L.</b>	unk.	7/15/23	Army	Leb/Gren	16	Anoka Post 102
<b>Temple, Fred P.</b>	88	8/28/23	Army	Korea	40	Elk River Post 112
<b>Thompson, Harold E.</b>	86	8/18/23	Army	Cold	11	Waite Park Post 428
<b>Throne, Eugene N.</b>	78	8/23/23	Army/AF	Vietnam	6	Winona Post 9
Note: He served in the Philippines and at various bases in the United States.						
<b>Toppin, Maurice H.</b>	95	8/8/23	Marines	WWII	76	Blue Earth Post 89
<b>Warke, Eugene O.</b>	96	8/21/23	Army	WWII	78	New Richland Post 75
Note: He was stationed in the South Pacific during World War II.						
<b>Welsh, Larry D.</b>	85	10/8/22	Air Force	Korea	53	Albert Lea Post 56
<b>Whittaker, Russell J.</b>	96	8/26/23	Navy	WWII	40	Waconia Post 150
<b>Whiplinger, Arthur J.</b>	78	8/17/23	Air Force	Vietnam	30	Albert Lea Post 56
<b>Woelfel, Lenus E.</b>	90	9/13/23	Army	Korea	59	Bloomington Viking Post 493
<b>Yort, Edward E.</b>	84	6/19/23	Army	Vietnam	21	Minneapolis-Richfield Post 435
<b>Zachow, Roman A. "Red"</b>	97	9/12/23	Navy	WWII	72	Gaylord Post 433

## All-Family Events Calendar

- Oct. 3-8:** John Zgoda Memorial Deer Hunt, Legionville
- Oct. 7:** Minnesota Veteran Suicide Prevention & Awareness Day, Paul Bunyan Park, Bemidji
- Oct. 9-12:** Fall Meetings, Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis
- Oct. 11:** Brain Sciences Lecture, Mpls. VAMC, Flag Atrium Auditorium
- Oct. 11-12:** National Executive Committee meeting, National HQ, Indianapolis
- Oct. 12-15:** Minnesota Legion College, Camp Ripley
- Oct. 26:** American Legion Department of Minnesota Executive Committee Meeting, Kelly Inn, St. Cloud
- Oct. 26:** American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota Executive Committee Meeting, River's Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud
- Oct. 26:** Meetings of various department committees for Legion and Auxiliary, River's Edge Convention Center & Kelly Inn, St. Cloud
- Oct. 27-28:** Department Fall Conference, River's Edge Convention Center & Kelly Inn, St. Cloud
- Nov. 11:** Veterans Day, local ceremonies
- Nov. 11:** Official State Veterans Day Ceremony, Veterans Memorial Community Center, Inver Grove Heights
- Dec. 9:** Pearl Harbor Rally, Paynesville Post 271
- Feb. 3:** Sweetheart Rally, Forest Lake Post 225
- Feb. 24-28:** Washington Conference, Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C.
- March 2:** Appreciation Rally, Montgomery Post 79
- May 6-9:** Spring Meetings, Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis
- July 11-13:** Department of Minnesota Convention, Willmar Convention Center, Willmar, hosted by Willmar Post 167
- Oct. 7-10 (2024):** Fall Meetings, Sheraton Hotel, Indianapolis

## Issue of veteran suicide is front and center at Bemidji event

BEMIDJI — The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs hosts the state's official Minnesota Veteran Suicide Prevention & Awareness Day event on Oct. 7.

The event begins at 10 a.m. at Paul Bunyan Park, with coffee and doughnuts at 9 a.m. (Also see advertisement on Page 3.)

The flier says the event is "a time to come together in remembrance of Minnesota veterans lost to suicide. We honor them by raising awareness and helping to save lives."

The speakers are:

- Tracy Dunham, a sister to Brady Oberg, of the Brady Oberg Legacy Foundation. Oberg, a veteran of combat in Afghanistan, took his own life on Aug. 6, 2015.

- Melinda "Mindy" Broden, a behavioral health counselor with Sanford Health. She is a suicide survivor.

- Author Wendell Affield, writer of his memoir of the Vietnam War and speaker on PTSD and expressive writing therapy.

Veteran service officers from the region will be on hand, too.



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# 'Be the One' will be crucial to suicide prevention

Don't look back. The National Convention is history. The Harvest Rally and Camporee are history. Time to plan to attend the Fall Conference.

This is being held at the River's Edge Convention Center and Best Western Kelly Inn in St. Cloud, Oct. 26, 27 and 28. We will be excited to have in attendance the leading candidate for national commander of The American Legion 2024-2025, James A. LaCoursiere Jr. from Connecticut, with us. Come out and meet this outstanding Legionnaire.

Fall Meetings are coming up in Indianapolis Oct. 9. It will be National Commander Dan Seehafer's homecoming.

The actual meetings will be Oct. 8-11. "Be the One" will

## National Report

Bill Barbknecht



be talked a lot about this year. Please do Buddy Checks, go see your members, call them and call on them.

It should be interesting with the dues increase possibly coming up on July 1, 2024.

Have you noticed prices going up? When was the last time your Post raised dues? Remember, it is a privilege to belong to this organization, not everyone can belong. For the great things we do for our Veterans, their families and our communities, our dues are still far less than other organizations, that possibly do what we do for less dues.

My apologies, in last month's article I had a huge error in the article. Our Post 489 Finance Officer and Chairman of the Finance Committee is Bricker Johnson.

Is your post finance officer bonded? We have a very good one who always gives a very good update on how our post is doing. How is your post doing?

American Education Week is coming in November. Please do

something for all your school employees, teachers, paras, bus drivers, cooks, custodian and all other school staff to show your support.

Do you have your Veterans Day program planned yet? Every post should be having one. I hope your post is doing something for its members for membership. Dinners, coffee a certain day every week are always great options. Spend money on your members also.

Donna and I look forward to seeing many of you at the Fall Conference in St. Cloud on Oct. 26, 27 and 28.

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

# Minnesota donated \$162,000 to Legacy Fund

Hello!

I had a great time at The American Legion National Convention, Camporee and the Romp.

On Tuesday, Aug. 29, representatives from the Minnesota American Legion Riders and the Minnesota American Legion Family went on stage and turned in \$162,000 for the Legacy Scholarship Foundation.

While we did not turn-in the most money this year (Maryland turned in \$211,000), the Minnesota American Legion Family turned in a total of \$1.6 million since the inception of the Minnesota Legacy Run. We are the only state to turn in over \$1

million in support of the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

Thank you for all the support the American Legion Family provided to the Legacy Run. This turn-in marks the completion of the mission handed down to the Legion Riders from National HQ.

A new mission has been given to the Riders; to raise funds for the National Veterans & Children's Fund. The completion of the Legacy Scholarship mission offered the Minnesota Legion Riders the perfect opportunity

to discuss and determine where the money we raise would be best used.

During the Riders Meeting, held during the Romp at Legionville on Sept. 16, the Minnesota Legion Riders voted to give the proceeds of the multiday run held in July to the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund 85. Our single-day run proceeds will be sent to national for the mission.

## Legion Riders

Jody Hassing



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

The Riders will have a learning session at Fall Conference at 2 p.m. Oct. 28. Please join us in St. Cloud, the entire Legion Family is welcome to come learn more about your American Legion Riders.

God bless and keep the rubber side down

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

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# Minnesota already is in 3rd place!

Great job, Department of Minnesota! As of this article written on Sept. 17, the Department of Minnesota was sitting in third place nationally.

We were sitting behind France and South Dakota. Historically, have we come out of the gates running at full speed, yes. This year is going to be different. We have so many awesome Legionnaires working hard doing great things, and, by that, I mean everyone, every single Legion Family member is working hard to advertise, talk about and promote The American Legion, our programs, and the reasons everyone should be part of our outstanding organization.

First, as the department membership director, "Thank you!"

Our goal has been set at 58,214 this year, and we are going to make that happen. Commander Paul Hassing has promised if we make 80,000 members and reach a goal of \$100,000 on the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund, he will

## Membership Moment

Pam Krill



dress up like Elvis and sing at the Department Convention. For those who may not be able to make it, don't worry. I am sure we will get it recorded.

I encourage all of you to throw out other challenges to your neighboring posts, your sister district or even the Department Membership Team! You all have a vice commander. *Let's have some fun!*

If potential members see or hear about our fun, they may be more eager to join. As your membership director, I am here for you! If you have questions, call, email, text, fax, mail, release a carrier pigeon, and I will get on it.

We are on the race to 100 percent, and we are over halfway there sitting at 58 percent. Let's keep going, have membership rallies, revitalizations, share

the ideas that are working in your areas, what you have done and been successful with. Let's work together to make the Department of Minnesota the cream of the crop!

You can reach me at my email: [pjkrill74@gmail.com](mailto:pjkrill74@gmail.com) or call 757-771-6901. If you need membership training, shoot me an email, and I will be there!

Thank you, American Legion Family in the great Department of Minnesota. This is the best place to be!

*Pam Krill of Fairmont Post 36 is the membership director for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.*

# Fall is a good time to engage schools

Cross country running was a fall sport I enjoyed as a student-athlete and as a coach. Changes and improvements seems to happen in the fall.

So it goes with Minnesota Boys State, as well. Indianapolis hosts another Boys State Directors Conference this month. A number of Minnesotans will attend to share ideas and glean ideas to improve an already good program. While there, they will also do some planning for next summer's main event.

## Minn. Boys State

Neil Kruse



Another fall happening is Homecoming in most schools. Their presentations and parades are more opportunities for the Boys State class of 2023 to showcase their experiences of last June, inviting high school juniors to join the brotherhood.

Local elections aren't far off either. How about we encourage

Boys State alumni to help citizens get to the polls?

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

# VA, American Legion confront suicide together

As your assistant department service officer, I would like to shed light on an important matter that requires our collective attention and involvement: suicide prevention. As members of our American Legion Family and community, it is important that we address this issue together and extend our support to those who may be struggling.

First and foremost, I want to emphasize the significant role that our community plays in promoting mental health and well-being. Our collective effort in this regard can be a powerful force, capable of positively impacting the lives of individuals who may be at risk. By understanding the warning signs and being aware of available resources, we can effectively intervene and save lives.

In this regard, I would like to highlight the crucial partnership between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and The American Legion. Through this collaboration, our community is equipped with comprehensive information and resources that can be instrumental in saving veterans' lives.

It is incumbent upon us to make the most of these tools and actively engage in suicide prevention efforts. Please stay tuned for our Media & Communication Committee members, who will interview Andrea Perry, the community

## VA & Rehabilitation

Janet Lorenzo



engagement and partnerships coordinator at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. Andrea will address ways that we, as Legionnaires, can engage those who need assistance and more importantly, keep ourselves safe in doing so.

I would like to address potential objections that some may have. These include concerns related to the effectiveness of prevention efforts, lack of understanding about mental health challenges, uncertainty about taking action, stigmatization and the idea that intervening in someone's life is not our responsibility.

### Effectiveness of prevention efforts

It is true that suicide prevention requires a multifaceted approach, combining awareness, education and access to mental health care. While it may seem daunting, even our smallest efforts can make a significant difference. By arming ourselves with knowledge and understanding, we can actively contribute to creating a supportive and safe environment for everyone in our community.

### Lack of understanding

Mental health challenges can be complex and often misun-

derstood. However, by promoting open dialogue and creating a safe space for discussion, we can foster empathy and enhance our collective understanding of these issues. The VA and The American Legion have diligently worked to provide accessible information and resources to address any misconceptions that may exist.

### Uncertainty about taking action

When faced with a situation where someone may be at risk, it is natural to feel uncertain about how to intervene. However, it is important to remember that sometimes a small gesture of kindness, such as lending an empathetic ear, can have a significant impact. The VA and The American Legion offer training programs and resources that can equip us with the tools to respond effectively and confidently.

### Stigmatization

There is a regrettable stigma surrounding mental health struggles that hampers progress in suicide prevention efforts. By challenging this stigma and

treating mental health like any other health issue, we can create an environment where individuals are comfortable seeking help. Our collective empathy and support can break down these barriers and pave the way for healing.

### Responsibility

As members of a caring community, we all have a shared responsibility to look out for one another's welfare. The moment we step in to support someone in distress, we not only reinforce the values that define our community but also offer hope in times of darkness. Together, we can make a positive impact on individuals' lives and ensure that no one feels alone in their struggles.

I urge every member of our community to actively participate in suicide prevention efforts. The resources and information provided by the VA and The American Legion are invaluable tools that can save the lives of our veterans. Let us come together, arm ourselves with knowledge and compassion, and create a community where mental health is a priority, and no individual feels alone or unsupported.

*Janet Lorenzo is the assistant department service officer for The American Legion Department of Minnesota and a member of Hastings Post 47.*

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Mobile: 612-251-9681 ★ [gforbes@vabenefitspro.com](mailto:gforbes@vabenefitspro.com)

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# AL Family Hospital Assoc. seeks 2 board members

The American Legion Family Hospital Association has processed seven applicants seeking financial assistant at a recent meeting.

Our ALFHA Board of Directors members were Department Commander Jennifer Havlick, Department Auxiliary President Mary Kuperus, SAL Detachment Commander Tim Weaver, Jenny Nelson, Tom Fernlund, Theresa Soltis, Gary Weaver and me. We said farewell to Alberta Marth-Wohlfeil, who passed away in March. ALFHA members decided not to fill her spot.

Marth-Wohlfeil and I have reached the point of six years in a row. The maximum number of

## ALFHA Report

Robert Bristo



years is six that any ALFHA director can have. This creates the two new openings for the election of new members for these openings at the Department of Minnesota Fall Conference in St. Cloud.

There will be an election of one Sons of The American Legion and one election for a Legion member. Nominations will come from the floor for those being nominated and are registered at the Fall

Conference. The votes will be counted, and the ones receiving the most votes getting the seats. Your attendance at this meeting is very important. These members are working to help

our American Legion Family members in their time of needing some type of financial assistance up to \$4,000.

Roger Stoick of the 10th District has been ALFHA's claims negotiator and will continue to be there to work on applications for assistance as they come in.

*Robert Bristo is a Sons of The American Legion member with Minneapolis Gopher Post 440, an SAL national vice commander and president of the ALFHA Board of Directors.*

# No Minnesota agencies or organizations receive VA grants on vet suicide

INDIANAPOLIS — The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on Sept. 20 awarded \$52.5 million in grants to 80 community-based organizations working to prevent veteran suicides.

Zero recipients are from Minnesota. It is unclear from the VA website whether no one from Minnesota applied or they didn't get approved.

For comparison, two Wisconsin groups received grants. The Center for Veterans Issues Ltd received \$750,000, and Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin received \$509,163.

The grants, part of the Staff Sgt. Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program, were awarded to organizations in 43 states, the District of Columbia, Guam and American Samoa. They will help these organizations provide or coordinate the provision of suicide prevention services for eligible veterans and their families.

Reducing the rate of veterans who die by suicide is the focus of The American Legion's highest priority, Be the One. The mission is aimed at reducing the perceived stigma associated with mental health treatment, raising awareness about the issue and empowering everyone to take the appropriate action when a veteran may be at risk.



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# The SAL Update:

## My Commander's Project is Fund 85

As I sit here writing this column, desperately trying to fight through writer's block, I know that the past commanders have probably written about most of the things that I think are important. And I truly hate to be redundant.

But then into my thoughts jump all of the wonderful people that I have met during my travels as a member of the American Legion Family, and I think that I am one lucky son of a gun for having made the acquaintance of all of you wonderful people.

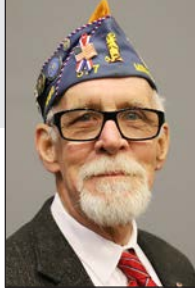
I know most of you don't do the things that you do to get recognition or "to wear the corsage," as our sisters (and a few brothers) in the Auxiliary say. You do it because you are truly driven to help our veterans and their families.

And I think that's one of the most beautiful and important things that you can do.

Being a dual member, I get to see both sides of the coin. The

### Detachment commander

John Weiss



help that is given freely without thought of recompense and the reluctant veteran who wishes that they didn't have to even ask for help.

Our national leadership team is continuing to use "Be the One" as its theme for the year. You folks out there in Legion Family-land are living it by your actions daily of being of service to our veterans. I have decided to put my project in conjunction with our Department Commander's Project and that is to raise \$100,000 for Fund 85, which, if you don't know, is our own Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund administered by the Minnesota American Legion Foundation and American Legion Department of Minnesota.

This means 100 percent of the donations to Fund 85 go to

the cause of helping veterans. Nothing goes toward administration because the Legion admin costs come from other sources.

This is a truly worthy project and the special thing about it is that it helps our Minnesota veterans. So, in closing this column, I would just like to give you all a huge *thank you* for all you do!

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



Third District Historian Casey Lenort, second from left, won Best District Scrapbook for 2023.



Detachment Commander John Weiss received his certificate for completing the Detachment Commanders Course.



Past 5th District President Becky Nelson places the gold cap on Robert Bristo of Minneapolis Gopher Squadron 440. Soon after, Past 5th District President Mary Younkin placed his name badge on his suit.



A large part of the Minnesota delegation from all across the American Legion Family was on hand at the SAL Convention in Charlotte on Aug. 27 to cheer on Bristo.



Past National Commander Doug Bible addresses the SAL National Convention.



National Northwestern Division Honorary Jr. Vice President Samantha Stai of New London Unit 537 was honored on the stage at the SAL Convention for participating in the SAL Children & Youth Room.

## Membership effort to require help from all of us

As of this report, the Detachment of Minnesota exceeded the national goal of 10 percent (by Sept. 13) and are currently at 19.07 percent. We only need 678 members renewed or new to reach the next goal of 25 percent, which is Oct 18. I know we can do it. Please stress to your Squadrons to not sit on membership and try to get it mailed or

input into MyLegion.org as soon as possible. Any assistance that you need please don't hesitate to let me or your leadership know.

Gary Richardson  
Detachment Membership Director  
membership@mnsal.org



From left are Jason Fink, Wes Thompson, Luther Dorr and Tim Engstrom. Thompson and Dorr were inducted into the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame in July in Rochester. Fink was the emcee. Engstrom performed the inductions.

## 4 inducted into Baseball Hall of Fame

ROCHESTER — When Luther Dorr was a boy in rural Princeton back in 1959, the local American Legion Baseball coach wanted him on the team on one condition: that he could make it to town.

So he would always be trying to find a ride to town. When he couldn't, he rode his bicycle 14 miles, mainly on a gravel road.

As a man, he became the editor of the Princeton newspaper, and during his 33 years in that role he expanded coverage of Legion Baseball, even hitting the road to cover tournaments in places like Grand Rapids and Alexandria.

He gave back to baseball by becoming an official scorer, doing public announcing and sometimes doing analysis for radio broadcasts.

Dorr was inducted last year into the Minnesota Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame and played town ball for 47 years. He also played baseball in high school, college and the Army. He died Sept. 15 before this issue came out. He is in "Taps" in this issue. He had been a member of Princeton Post 216 for 58 years. He had been the 10th District baseball director since 2018.

Wes Thompson is a 49-year member of The American Legion. He is a member of Waite Park Post 428. He also is a member of the Sons of The American Legion. He is a past 6th District commander and serves on the National Security Council for The American Legion at the national level. He is an Army veteran.

He started in Legion Baseball as manager for the Upsala team. Later, he managed the Foley team, then the Waite Park crew. He has been the 6th District baseball director for 15 years.

He has bartended at the Legion posts in Foley and Waite Park. He took first place in Minnesota and 10th in the nation for the U.G.L.Y. Bartender Contest in the 1980s. The name stands for Understanding, Generous, Loving, You, and it

raises funds for multiple sclerosis.

Both men were inducted into the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame on July 26 in Rochester.

Also inducted into the Hall of Fame was Donald "Bucky" Burgau, the all-time winningest coach in the history of Concordia-Moorhead athletics. The coach served 36 years as baseball coach and won 711 games. He also coached the Moorhead Post 21 Blues American Legion baseball team from 1973 to 1999, to the benefit of many of the players.

Moorhead Post 21 made it all the way to the American Legion World Series in 1988 in Middletown, Conn.

His induction ceremony will come during the next Moorhead Blues baseball season.

The Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Sportsmanship Trophy is named for Father David Moran of Farmington. He was the first baseball director for the 3rd District and a Catholic priest for the Church of St. Michael. He lived from 1881 to 1944 and was instrumental in the early history of the baseball program. He, too, was inducted this year. An official ceremony is to be scheduled.

The state champions were featured in the September issue of The Minnesota Legionnaire.

Other honorees of the past season were:

- Post of the Year: Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172, for its past financial support of the state committee (which primarily uses donations to fund postseason expenses) and for fielding excellent baseball teams.

- Coaches of the Year: Lon Berberich of Le Sueur-Henderson, Doug Ruter of Willmar and Jamie Mulvihill of Mankato.

- Graduate of the Year was Brad Hand, a relief pitcher for the Atlanta Braves (and formerly with several other teams over 12 seasons) who once played for the Chaska Post 57 team.



Bucky Burgau



Past Department Commander Tom Fernlund, right, announced that Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172 was Post of the Year.



State Baseball Director Randy Schaub, right, announced Doug Ruter of Willmar as 2023 Coach of the Year.



Emcee Jason Fink, left, stands with 2023 Coach of the Year Lon Berberich of Le Sueur-Henderson.



District 2 Director Vern Kitzberger, left, announced Jamie Mulvihill of Mankato National as 2023 Coach of the Year.





**MINNESOTA  
AMERICAN LEGION  
FAMILY  
FALL  
CONFERENCE**

# The Program

**Friday, Oct. 27, to  
Saturday, Oct. 28  
with committees  
Thursday, Oct. 26**

**THURSDAY, OCT. 26**

Time	Session	Room
2 p.m.	Gambling Seminar	Ballroom
<b>3-5 p.m. Committee Meetings</b>		
3 p.m.	Convention Corp. Committee	University A
4 p.m.	Americanism	Senate
4 p.m.	Children & Youth	Poolside
4 p.m.	National Security & Foreign Relations	Congress
4 p.m.	Strategic Planning	University B
4 p.m.	American Legion Foundation	Boardroom
<b>5-7 p.m. Supper break</b>		
7 p.m.	Department Executive Committee	Ballroom

**FRIDAY, OCT. 27**

Time	Session	Room
8-8:20 a.m.	Opening Ceremonies and Greetings Commander 6th District Commander Area Department Vice Commander Mayor of St Cloud St Cloud Convention & Visitors Bureau	Ballroom

**8:30-9:25 a.m. Breakout Training Sessions**

Topic	Instructor(s)	Room
MyLegion.org	Pam Krill	Senate
Be the One	Kelley Adelman	University A
I'm a New Officer, Now What Do I Do?	Joe Tappainer	University B
Post Service Officer Responsibilities	Ray Kane & Janet Lorenzo	Congress

**9:30-10:25 a.m. Breakout Training Sessions**

Topic	Instructor(s)	Room
Consolidated Post Reports	Linda Dvorak	Senate
Post/District Engagement	Gary Richardson & Mike Ash	Ballroom (State)
Minnesota Suicide Prevention Awareness Coalition	Andrea Perry & Laura Stumvoll	University A
Mentorship	Paul Edwards	University B

**10:35 a.m. General Session**

Time	Session	Room
10:35-11:20 a.m.	NSFR Outstanding Enlisted Service Members	Ballroom
11:20-11:35 a.m.	NEC Reporting Nationally and Introduction	
11:35-11:55 a.m.	Leading candidate for National Commander	
11:55-noon	Announcements	

**Noon Lunch Break**

**1-1:55 p.m. Breakout Training Sessions**

Topic	Instructor	Room
Legislative Initiatives & Involvement	Kristy Janigo	University A
Consolidated Post Reports	Linda Dvorak	Senate
County Veteran Service Officer Duties	Josh Beninga	University B
I'm a New Officer Now What Do I Do?	Joe Tappainer	Ballroom (State)

**2-2:55 p.m. Breakout Training Sessions**

Topic	Instructor	Room
Be the One	Kelley Adelman	University A
Post Legal Issues	Greg Colby	University B
Post/District Engagement	Gary Richardson & Mike Ash	Ballroom (State)
MyLegion.org	Pam Krill	Senate

**3 p.m. General Session**

Time	Session	Room
3:05-3:25 p.m.	Guest Speaker: Mohamed Sabur Minnesota Attorney General's Office, Charities Division "Duty of Corporate Officers"	Ballroom
3:25-3:30 p.m.	Adjutant Updates & Commander Comments	
3:30 p.m.	Recess	
4 p.m.	Hospital Association Meeting	University B
4 p.m.	Legislative Committee Meeting	Senate
5:30 p.m.	SAL Detachment Finance & Executive Committee meetings	University A

**SATURDAY, OCT. 28**

Time	Session	Room or Speaker
9:00 a.m.	Opening Ceremonies and Greetings	Ballroom
9:05 a.m.	Legion Family Greetings Department Auxiliary President NW Division National Vice President Honorary Department Jr. President Sons of the American Legion Commander Department American Legion Riders Director	
9:25 a.m.	Department Budget Process	Rachael Hill
9:45 a.m.	Convention Committee updates	Convention Comm. Chairman
10 a.m.	Fund 85 Application Process	Janet Lorenzo
10:20 a.m.	National Convention Delegate	Mike Maxa
10:35 a.m.	Department Membership updates	Pam Krill
10:55 a.m.	Minnesota Legionnaire Changes	Tim Engstrom

*Continued at the top of the page*

11:30 a.m.	Feedback: How were the programs? Recommendations?
11:45 a.m.	Donations & Commander's final comments
<b>noon</b>	<b>Adjournment</b>
8 a.m.-2 p.m.	SAL Detachment General Session
1-3 p.m.	American Legion Riders Mtg
	University A
	University B

## Subject Synopsis:

**MyLegion.org:** An overview of how to navigate the mylegion program. How to process membership and what reports are available for a membership directors' success.

**Be the One:** An explanation of the national organizations suicide prevention program. How the districts and posts can bring awareness to their members. Resources available for awareness.

**I'm a New Officer Now What Do I Do:** Post-district-department responsibilities, duties and expectations of officers. How to conduct a meeting and the number of resources available for success.

**Post Service Officer Responsibilities:** The responsibilities of the post service officer to bring awareness to all veterans and their families on the rights and benefits granted to them.

**Consolidated Post Reports:** The importance of why it's crucial to complete the CPR every year. How to use mylegion to complete the annual report. And, how the National Commander uses the report testifying before congress.

**Post/District Engagement:** Revitalizations, finding today's veteran and asking them to join. Building relationships with guard/reserve units, armory visits, and college veterans resource centers.

**Minnesota Suicide Prevention Awareness Coalition:** What is a coalition and its purpose. Resources available for awareness and the different training courses available. Why it's important to have the resources at the post levels.

**Mentorship:** How to teach new members the way of The American Legion. Traditions and ceremonies. Listen and try new ideas from our new members. Be there to answer the questions they may have.

**Legislative Initiatives & Involvement:** The 2024 American Legion Department of Minnesota legislative priorities. How you can be involved and why we need the voice of our members and posts.

**County Veteran Service Officer Duties:** Why it's important to contact your County Veteran Service Officer and register with them. The number of services they offer and how to receive the benefits our veterans deserve.

**Post Legal Issues:** The importance of a post to be incorporated and the difference between INC or LLC. Member discipline and how to ban a customer or member from the post.

## Notices

**VA&R:** Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund (Fund 85) & Unite US: The DSO and ADSO will have an office set up in the Congress room throughout Friday after their training session to answer any questions or concerns posts or members might have dealing with the needs of our veterans. They will also provide one on one training for post service officers, Fund 85 and Unite Us and any other questions regarding veteran care or benefits.

**Media & Communications Studio:** Podcasts and interviews will be in the employee lounge on the second floor.

## How to attend

To attend the Fall Conference, clip out the registration form on Page 3 of this issue of The Minnesota Legionnaire. Then mail it with your check as instructed on the form.

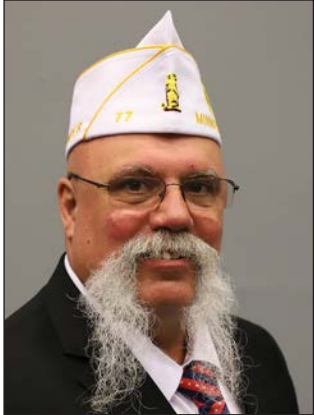


**Seeing the recipients of Outstanding Enlisted Awards and their families is a major draw for the Fall Conference.**



**PAUL HASSING**  
Montgomery  
COMMANDER

# Minnesota's 2023-24 Dept. Leadership Team



**CHUCK STONE**  
Owatonna  
VICE COMMANDER 1&3



**VICTOR GADES**  
Morris  
VICE COMMANDER 2&7



**LYNNE NOTTAGE**  
Minneapolis  
VICE COMMANDER 4&5



**PAUL EDWARDS**  
Brainerd  
VICE COMMANDER 6&9



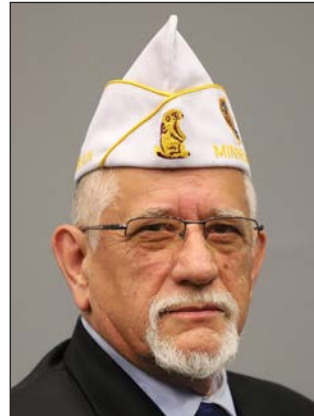
**BILL GORDON**  
Albertville  
VICE COMMANDER 8&10



**PAM KRILL**  
Blue Earth  
MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR



**CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON**  
Hastings  
HISTORIAN



**DEAN KNUTSON**  
Marshall  
CHAPLAIN



**BRAD PAGEL**  
Slayton  
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

## District Commanders



**MARK MALONEY**  
Winona  
DIST. 1 COMMANDER



**JAMES OLSON**  
Amboy  
DIST. 2 COMMANDER



**ROD REIFSTECK**  
Elysian  
DIST. 3 COMMANDER



**TERESA ASH**  
St. Paul  
DIST. 4 COMMANDER



**RICHARD WARD**  
Minneapolis  
DIST. 5 COMMANDER



**ANTHONY KOOP**  
Ironton  
DIST. 6 COMMANDER



**JAN EKERT**  
South Haven  
DIST. 7 COMMANDER



**JENNIFER HAVLICK**  
Two Harbors  
DIST. 8 COMMANDER



**STEVE NASALLE**  
Fergus Falls  
DIST. 9 COMMANDER



**MATTHEW BERENS**  
Andover  
DIST. 10 COMMANDER

# PAUL HASSING

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER  
2023-24

Paul Hassing was elected the 104th Department commander of the Minnesota American Legion at the annual convention held in Morton.

Hassing, who resides in Montgomery and belongs to Bloomington Post 550, will serve a one-year term for the 2023-24 American Legion year.

Hassing served as the 10th District commander in 2017-18. He served as the director of the Minnesota American Legion Riders for two one-year terms during the pandemic years of 2019-20-21. He was the department membership director for 2021-22.

Hassing is the past commander of Minneapolis Veterans Home Post 581 and past commander and past adjutant of Bloomington Post 550. He has served several roles in the 10th District. He graduated from National American Legion College in 2010. He serves on the National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Council.

He retired from the Army Reserve in June 2023 with 32 years of service, 17 active and 15 Reserve as a flight operations coordinator, combat engineer, preventative medicine sergeant and retention NCO. He has been deployed multiple times to support the Global War on Terrorism and has combat tours in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan. In addition, he has deployed to Papua New Guinea for a humanitarian mission.

His wife, Jody Hassing, is the president of Bloomington Unit 550. She was elected to a two-year term to be director of the Minnesota American Legion Riders, to serve 2023-25. The pair has been married for 15 years. They have five children and eight grandchildren.

The Hassings, most notably, have led efforts in Minnesota to raise funds for the American Legion Legacy Scholarship, and for 12 years straight Minnesota has been the top donor at national conventions. In all, Minnesota American Legion Riders have raised \$1.5 million for this cause.

Hassing's theme for the year is "The Road Ahead." His Commander's Project is the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund.



# SHARON CROSS

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT  
2023-24

Sharon Cross has been a member of the American Legion Auxiliary since her first birthday. She started as a Junior member of Portage Park American Legion Auxiliary in Chicago.

She is eligible for membership through her grandfather a World War I veteran, her father a Korean War veteran, her husband a Vietnam War veteran, three sons and one of her two daughters.

Cross transferred to the Ralph Gracie Unit 14 in Bemidji in 1999. She has held many chairmanships for her unit including president from 2006 to 2008 and 2015 to 2017. She is currently the unit secretary/treasurer. She has also been active at the district level and served as 6th District president in 2011-2012 and 2018-2019.

At the Department of Minnesota level, Cross has served as Leadership and Poppy chairman, served on the Audit Committee (now called Risk & Compliance) and the American Legion Family Hospital Association. She also served as membership chairman for two years during COVID. She has been Legislative chairman and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation chairman. Sharon has served as a counselor at Minnesota Girls State many times and assisted in their Moccasin Office and Shirt Shack.

Cross married her husband, Richard, on Memorial Day 2023, not long before taking office as president in mid-July. She previously had the surname Thiemecke. They reside on Sauk Lake in Sauk Centre.

She retired after working 24 years as a nursing assistant in a nursing home and homecare, hospice and assisted living center. Cross danced for over 45 years and raised her three sons and two daughters as a dance family. She has 14 grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Cross considers it a privilege as a member of the American Legion Auxiliary to "Be The One to Dance Into the Hearts of Veterans" and represent all our members as the Department of Minnesota president.





Members of the delegation from Minnesota for The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion gather for a photo in the lobby of the Marriott Charlotte City Center on Sunday, Aug. 27. Most of them wore the new maroon Department of Minnesota shirt from Viking Swag Co.

## Minn. Riders raise \$162,000 for Legacy Scholarships

Continued from Page 1

Often, dues are divided among post, district, department and national. Sometimes, there is a county level, too. Each part of the Legion determines its portion of the dues.

The present national resolution calls for an increase of \$5 starting in the Legion year that begins July 1, 2024, Barbknecht said. That so-soon date means departments, districts or posts will have to adjust to maintain their funding levels, and many departments and districts would have not have time for their conventions to make decisions.

"Posts are going to have to decide by April 1 what do you want to charge for 2024-25," Barbknecht said.

He said it will be interesting to see what happens at the Fall Meetings.

The resolution also increases the Paid Up For Life (PUFL) amounts. People wanting to join as PUFLs ought to do so now before July 1.

"I've never done it, but I am going to do it now because everything in society is going up and up in price," Barbknecht said.

He added the resolution offers a three-year option for membership, locked into the current rate. Right now, people renew for one year or for life.

Here are news and notes from the 104th National Convention in Charlotte:

• A resolution Department of Minnesota Service Officer Ray Kane and his assistant, Janet Lorenzo, calling for the VA to assess the affects of the anthrax shot on Persian Gulf War-era

veterans and Gulf War syndrome on brain atrophy, bowel dysfunction and other areas, was referred to the National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee and HQ staff for further study, according to 2nd District Commander James Olson.

Kane said he has been in communications with national staff about rewriting the resolution with the hopes it can go before the National Executive Committee at the Fall Meetings Oct. 11-12.

• A Minnesota resolution to add correctional officers to the American Legion Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer Award had a strong reception at the National Security Convention Committee's hearing on it, said Past Department Commander Jim Kellogg, who sits on the National Security Council. He said it might need to be rewritten to be its own award, rather than part of the existing award.

This resolution original came out of the 7th District.

• The Minnesota American Legion Riders turned in \$162,000 for the Minnesota Legacy Fund. For a decade, Minnesota has given the most for the ALR's mission to raise funds for the Legacy Fund. This year, Maryland (a state also with electronic pulltabs) made an extra special effort and topped all departments by raising \$211,000 this year. Many people noted Maryland would not have raised so much if Minnesota for years had not set the bar so high.

• The two Legionnaires to attend National Legion College in December at National HQ in



Members of the Minnesota American Legion Riders pose for a picture with then-National Commander Jim Troiola of New York and Minnesota Convention Delegation Chairman Tom Fernlund of Waite Park Post 428. Another state, Maryland, finally topped Minnesota. Maryland raised \$211,000. Maryland also is a state with e-pulltabs.

Indianapolis are Joseph Bares of Jordan Post 3 and James Hultgren of Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172.

• The American Legion is encouraging all members of the Legion Family to emphasize the first day of each month as Be the One Day. This stems from a resolution passed by the National Executive Committee at the Spring Meetings in May 2023.

The resolution urges Legion Family members, on the first day of every month, to wear a Be the One item to show their commitment to reducing the stigma around mental health issues among veterans and servicemembers — and to start a conversation about what Be the One is and how to save the life of a veteran. Legion posts should also promote Be the One on the first day of every month.

• Hillsdale College will be the new host of the National

Oratorical Contest, which will take place in May. In previous years, it happened in April at the Wyndham Indianapolis West Hotel. Hillsdale College is in Hillsdale, Mich. The 2024 contest finals will be May 17-19.

Department Oratorical Contests will remain at the same time frame, typically in February.

• The winner of the Philip B. Onderdonk Jr. Religious Liberty Award, presented by First Liberty Institute and The American Legion, went to Shields of Strength.

Shields of Strength is a faith-based company that made replica dogtags with inspirational Bible verses for servicemembers.

During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, hundreds of thousands were donated to troops. Some units bought them for their soldiers. Many have been given to first responders, too.

First Liberty is fighting in

federal court for Shields of Strength. An anti-religious group filed a complaint against the Christian goods store, which led to the Department of Defense instituting a discriminatory policy that's preventing Shields from producing and distributing its tags. First Liberty intends to reverse that policy on the First Amendment grounds of religious freedom.

On their side is 245 years of American military-and-religion precedence, such as soldiers or sailors carrying a small New Testament in their pockets.

"The Department of Defense gave in and made it impossible for these to get to military personnel," Kelly Shackelford, CEO of First Liberty, told the convention.

• Most of the national membership awards were won by the Department of Puerto Rico and the Department of Mexico.

The Department of Mexico also is going through procedures to change its name to the Department of Latin America. It presently has members from much of the region, not just Mexico.

• At the Minnesota caucus on Monday, Aug. 28, Past National Vice Commander Al Davis, treasurer of the Convention Corp., announced that the Convention Corp. had secured a package to have the American Legion Department Convention in Willmar for the next five years. He noted multiyear deals reduce costs and lock in hotel rates.

• The Fourth Estate Awards were awarded to WFTS-TV in Tampa, Fla., and to Military.com.

The TV station won the broadcast award for exposing a sham company doing fake COVID tests during the time COVID testing was in high demand. When the TV reporters came and asked to see the lab, the company refused because, obviously, there was no lab. Drug store tests were more reliable than these scammers.

Military.com won the print/web award for its coverage of the PACT Act and efforts by veteran service organizations like The American Legion to get it passed. The award stated Military.com gave far and away more time and resources to coverage of the bill than any other media outlet.





Country music singer Keni Thomas, a veteran, sings at the 104th National Convention.

## Black Hawk crashing changed mission

Continued from Page 1

No. 1 in such a situation. People tend to default to flight, fright or freeze.

"They never were told they are part of something bigger than themselves," he said. "The helicopter went down, and I can't say, 'Oh, gosh, I hope they are going to be OK.' I have to step out of my comfort zone and go do something that's hard."

He said his team went three blocks, then turned toward the crash.

"People were shooting at us, but it wasn't that bad," Thomas said.

Wait a second. Did he just say people shooting at them wasn't bad?

That because they were missing, he added.

On what was previously an ordinary day, the residents of the whole city now were rushing to the crash site, Thomas said. It became what he calls the "Hollywood moment." A second chopper, Super 64, also was shot down. A third, Super 62, was hit but managed to land away from danger.

There came a "crazy firefight" to save the helicopter crews. Why did these soldiers fight for the stranded men?

"Because they would have done it for us."

Thomas told how many of the U.S. Special Operations — Delta, Ranger, Special Forces, Special Tactics, SEALs, 160th Aviation Regiment — look to the Bible verse Isaiah 6:8, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"

The lesson of his address to the Legionnaires was: "Serve your people."

### National elections

Here is what happened in Charlotte regarding elections of officers:

- One of Minnesota Legion Family's own members was elected to a national office.

Robert L. Bristo of Minneapolis Gopher Squadron 440 was elected one of the five national vice commanders for the Sons of The American Legion. A large contingent of Minnesota Legion Family members turned out on Aug. 27 for the announcement.

Bristo will cover the SAL's Central Region. You can visit [legion.org/sons/officers](http://legion.org/sons/officers) and see Bristo smiling in his picture.

The other four are Northeast Region John R. Cook of New Hampshire, Southeast Region Linwood A. Moore of Virginia, Midwest Region Terry A. Harris of Kansas; Western Region James R. Fischer Sr. of California.

- The American Legion elected Daniel J. Seehafer of Horicon, Wis., Post 157 the 2023-24 national commander.

Seehafer likes to say, "It's personal," when it comes to The American Legion's mission of serving veterans and their families. He is continuing the theme of "Be the One," to prevent veteran suicide.

He is an ordained minister and is a veteran of the Navy and Navy Reserve. He served as a chaplain in the military and is a past American Legion national chaplain.

Seehafer and his wife, Stacey, who is a member of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 157, live in Beaver Dam, Wis. Dan's son, Jacob, and daughter, Emma, are also members of the Post 157 family. Dan is the son of the late Lester Seehafer and Jean Sabatke.

- Five national vice commanders were elected. They are Robert "Mark" Shreve of Pine Mountain Valley, Ga., Post 189; Raymond L. Vail of Arma, Kan., Post 182; Charles D. Aucoin of Westlake, La., Post 370; Bill Roy of Manchester, N.H., Post 2; and Randy D. Edwards of Provo, Utah, Post 13.

- The other national constitutional officers are Adjutant Daniel S. Wheeler of Richmond, Va., Post 137; Treasurer Shawn T. Long of Greenwood, Ind., Post 252; Judge Advocate Mark Seavey of Mathews, Va., Post 83; Chaplain Frank Carr of Halifax, Va., Post 99; Historian Edward A. DeGumbia of Southington, Conn., Post 72; Sergeant-at-Arms James W. Kell of Horicon, Wis., Post 157.

- The leading candidate for 2024-25 national commander is James A. LaCoursiere Jr. of Connecticut. He will visit the Department of Minnesota during the Fall Conference in St. Cloud on Friday, Oct. 27.

LaCoursiere served as commander of the Department of Connecticut 2006-07, in addition to several other offices and going through American Legion College. He is a founder and past director of the Connecticut Legion Riders, too. He has been in many roles at the national level, and this past year, he was on the Citizens Flag Alliance Advisory Committee and chaired the Legislative Commission. He belongs to Moosup, Conn., Post 91 and Squadron 91.

He served in the Air Force from 1981 to 1983 during the Grenada/Lebanon era and was trained to help medical evacuations and worked in patient affairs at Tactical Air Command, Moody Air Force Base in Valdosta, Ga. He is married to his

wife, Lisa, and has two children, Patrick and Meghan, and three stepchildren, Jason, Kaylene and (deceased) Johnathan.

LaCoursiere works for the Department of Connecticut as a field representative helping veterans and their families.

- At the 102nd American Legion Auxiliary National Convention, delegates elected Lisa Williamson of Fairbanks, Alaska, Unit 57 the national president.

She is eligible for ALA membership through her father, Ray Allington, her adoptive father, Keith LaChance, and through the military service of her son, Kyle, who serves in the Alaska Air Guard. Williamson is also an American Legion Rider. She has worked for the Department of Alaska for eight years and has been a licensed real estate agent for 20 years.

She escapes the winter months to Arizona with her husband Darrel. She has two children, Danielle and Kyle, and two grandsons, Dawson and Micah.

She has held many positions at the national, department, district and unit levels. She served as the national vice president in the 2022-2023 year.

- Other national ALA officers are Vice President Trish Ward of Kansas, Secretary Kathy Daudistel of Kentucky, Treasurer Marybeth Revoir of Illinois, Central Vice President Carol T. Robinson of Ohio, Eastern Vice President Debra Tiernan of Vermont, Northwestern Vice President Karen Susag of Montana, Southern Vice President Christine Trahan of Texas, Western Vice President Jeanette Cushing of Arizona, Historian Donna Thurman of Kentucky, Chaplain Brister Thomas of Hawaii

- Sons of The American Legion delegates elected Donald "JR" Hall Jr. as national commander for the coming year.

Hall, a member of Squadron 40 in Glen Burnie, Md., where he's served as squadron commander several times, said, "This whole trip's been for one guy: Edward Hall, World War II vet (and Hall's grandfather)."

He also thanked his family for their support: "You don't do this without your family. You can't do it without your family. I have such a great family."

- Other SAL national officers, not including assistants, this year are Adjutant Anthony W. Wright of Pennsylvania, Chaplain Earnest E. Laberge of Maine, Historian Jeffrey Thorne of Maryland and Sergeant-at-Arms Mark T. Fayer Sr. of Maryland.

# 2 Minn. resolutions passed at Nat'l Conv.

In all, the 104th convention approved 12 measures

By Tim Engstrom

American Legion conventions big and small have election of officers, reports of committees, camaraderie, patriotic protocol and moments of remembrance. However, their main order of business is to review and vote on resolutions.

The 104th National Convention approved 12 resolutions, two of which hailed from Minnesota. Here they are, in numbered order:

- Resolution 3, origin South Dakota, submitted as amended and consolidated with No. 9 (New York) by Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, says The American Legion supports legislation to amend existing language for the VA's 10 percent rating for hypertension to read, "or; minimum evaluation for an individual who requires continuous medication for control," and to better align all VA regulations for hypertension with the broader medical community.

- Resolution 4, origin South Dakota, submitted by Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, says The American Legion supports amending legislation to open eligibility for government-issued markers on private graves regardless of the date of the death. The present language prohibits government-issued markers to veterans who have privately marked graves and died before Nov. 1, 1990, in opposition to the National Cemetery Administration's own vision of ensuring "No Veteran Ever Dies."

- Resolution 13, origin Minnesota, submitted as amended by Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education, requested Congress to pass a bill requiring all active duty, whether retiring or ending their term of service, to be given paperwork during outprocessing that allows them to volunteer their contact information to the national office of The American Legion. Within Minnesota, this came from Lewiston Post 90 and the 1st District.

- Resolution 14, origin Minnesota, submitted as amended by Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education, states The American Legion strongly advocates for the preservation of housing benefits for student veterans pursuing online education through the G.I. Bill. The resolution urges federal policymakers to recognize the importance of inclusive policies that encompass both in-person and online learning. Within Minnesota, this came from the Department VA&R Committee staff and Marissa Capra of St. Paul 3M Post 599.

- Resolution 17, origin Texas, submitted as amended by the Convention Committee on National Security, encourages The American Legion to support economic ties between the United States and Taiwan, promotes Taiwan's

membership in the United Nations, World Health Organization and other international bodies, and calls for all necessary measures to boost Taiwan's self-defense. It also says both sides of the Taiwan Strait (essentially, the two Chinas) should promote peaceful dialogue and avoid any change that might lead to military conflict.

- Resolution 18 says The American Legion supports permanent authorization of the 199A Qualified Business Income deduction for small business because many are owned by veterans and their families.

- Resolution 19 is like Resolution 18 only for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, or WOTC.

- Resolution 20 is like resolutions 18 and 19 but, instead of pointing to a specific item, it says The American Legion supports all tax-reducing policies and opposes tax increases. All three originated from Texas and were submitted by the Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education.

- Resolution 28, origin Iowa, submitted by Convention Committee on Veterans Employment & Education, states The American Legion applauds and supports the Department of the Navy for the creation of Accelerated Training in Defense Manufacturing (ATDM) to ensure a skilled workforce is available to build and maintain submarines. The resolution encourages other branches and industrial bases to follow the example.

- Resolution 30, origin Michigan, submitted as amended by Convention Committee on National Security, calls on Congress to provide adequate funding for modernizing the U.S. military and reaffirms The American Legion's commitment to the defense of the country through a high state of readiness.

- Resolution 47, origin Virginia, submitted by Convention Committee on Internal Affairs, recognizes the Bedford Boys Tribute Center in Virginia for its role in preserving and honoring memories of World War II. The Bedford Boys are Company A, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, and were the first wave onto Omaha Beach on D-Day in 1944.

- Resolution 48, origin Virginia, submitted by Convention Committee on National Security, calls on Congress to re-shore (as in the opposite of "to off-shore") and to expand key defense industries, including the mining of rare earth minerals, and to strengthen incentives for small businesses and new entrants to defense contracting. It suggests incentives such as targeting visa approvals for STEM talent, direct project financing and automatic fast-tracking permits. It calls for better oversight of mergers, intellectual property and acquisition. The resolution notes that a robust and secure industrial base is critical to homeland security.



Marissa LaCourt, chairwoman of the Department of Minnesota's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee at the time, gave a training seminar at the 104th National Convention in Charlotte on volunteering and membership. LaCourt is a member of the 2022 class for National American Legion College.



Photos by Amy Larsen  
Mondays at any national convention are full of educational classes. Tim Engstrom, editor of The Minnesota Legionnaire, gave a training seminar on advertising. He explained who likes to advertise in veterans publications and how to raise funds with ads. Many in attendance were hoping to use ads to offset newsletter costs.



Rick Cross when he was in Vietnam.

## Cross signed up for another year, then ended up in for 28

Continued from Page 1

personnel, would go out on patrols for 30 or 40 days at a time. They had worked the well-known Michelin rubber plantation. At Firebase Keene, they faced a ground attack. During these patrols, the men grew beards, and some had Mohawks. All had rotten uniforms.

Being new, he didn't know what was going on.

"When I got there, they still had K rations. Then they got C Rations," Cross said.

They would be in firefights, and little kids behind them would pick up brass casings. People were dying, and the children were used to it. Most of the enemies they faced were Viet Cong.

One time, his platoon crossed the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and they set up an ambush. They even would see people riding bicycles while carrying weapons.

While on patrol, the company commander radioed there was a Navy base five miles away. They walked there and went to the mess hall.

"We reeked," Cross said. "We had beards and had no showers for three weeks."

A young Marine in a starved uniform would not let them in. Why?

"Just look at you."

Cross walked to his gunner and instructed him to point his firearm at the Marine but not shoot him. He did. The Marine was scared. Meanwhile, a sailor saw the scene and scrambled.

The soldiers were fed. They relieved the gunner, who ate, and they left. The Marine guard then reported the incident to the Officer of the Day, who put the men in the brig.

There, they lived the high life. They enjoyed showers, shaves, clean clothes and a comfy jail bed.

"We were enjoying it, basically," Cross said.

About a day and a half later, the Navy captain came in one day and said they were free to go. Cross inquired why.

The captain replied: "I got some irate Ranger call me and say, 'Let those lazy sonovabitches out of jail so they can complete their mission.'"

Ever heard of the Rung Sat Swap? The patrols would set up ambushes there. Water would be one to five feet deep or so. The land crabs would dig holes or crawl on the soldiers at night, Cross said. They would crawl right on the face but not hurt the human.

Leeches, however, were six to eight inches long and would attach all over. Soldiers would burn them off with cigarettes.

"Between the leeches, the scorpions and the giant ants, it was weird," Cross said.

His first tour was 11 months. The 16th Regiment, along with the entire 1st Division, all went

back to Fort Riley, Kan., where they were based. Because Cross had not been in Nam for a year, he got pulled out and sent to be part of the 25th Infantry Division — "Tropic Lightning" — with the then-unmentionable task of going into Cambodia.

It wouldn't be his first time there. One time, on patrol in the 1st Infantry Division, they went into Cambodia in uniforms with no names, country, flag or unit designations. They didn't exist. They weren't there.

During that patrol, they got ran out by the North Vietnamese Army, much more experienced than the VC. The Americans had to perform a Claymore extraction. They would hit the NVA with Claymore mines, then run like hell for the helicopter.

Once Cross reached a year in Vietnam, he decided to extend a year. There was an economic recession back in the States, and the country was in turmoil over the war. He figured there were no jobs, particularly for undesired veterans.

With the 25th, he was part of the 1st Battalion 27th Infantry, aka "Wolfhounds." He was an M-60 gunner, and, upon landing on a hot LZ in Cambodia, Cross, bearing a heavy pack, fell, perhaps on a stick or tree root, he said. A big Texas assistant gunner pulled him up easily with one hand.

They ran to attack an NVA base camp after Air Force bombers had swept it. There were dead enemies with their body parts all blown up. The soldiers of the 25th closed out any remaining enemies.

Next, the brass set the team up in a town for three days, and they patrolled the area known as the Parrot's Beak — a portion of Cambodia that protrudes into Vietnam. There were NVA all over. Cross was an E-5 buck sergeant by now.

He was skinny, too, and the skinny guys did the duty of tunnel rat. He did it three times with the Wolfhounds, and, after that, he said he was done. No more.

Two guys would crawl in with a .45 (officially the M1911A1 Service Pistol) and a flashlight. Two of those times, it was uneventful. They would crawl out and toss a grenade inside to collapse the tunnel.

One of the times, he got 25 feet down, and he heard voices. People were talking. He motioned to the second guy to prepare the white phosphorus grenades.

"We chucked a couple of Willie Peters down there, and we could hear them screaming," Cross said.

On patrol one day, they found an NVA rice cache. They waited, and at night, took out an NVA soldier who visited the cache.

A couple of nights later, their patrol of six got hit by the NVA.



Past 6th District Commander Rick Cross of Melrose Post 101 stands inside the Charlotte Convention Center in August during the 104th National American Legion Convention.

Cross and the medic were in a fox-hole dug by the rice cache. Meanwhile, the team leader was shot and killed trying to outrun a bullet.

"We thought, 'We'd better move,' and as soon as we did, the bullets began striking the ground by where our feet were," he said.

The machine gunner opened up, ending the NVA attack.

Another night, there was a point when, at 11 p.m., a father and son came to the rice cache with two ox carts. Curfew was 10 a.m. The two men were restocking the cache. The U.S. soldiers took them out.

The colonel and battalion commander came out and told the patrol what a fine job they did. They left and sent a chopper to pick them up and bring them to the rear. They learned the South Vietnamese government wanted to file charges against them. One of the men on the road was a religious leader. If convicted, they could go to LBJ, a presidential nickname for a Saigon prison actually named Long Binh Jail.

They waited a week, and during this time he got in trouble for stealing the

judge advocate's Coca-Cola. (If you see Cross in person, ask him about stealing this soda.)

Finally, they got to ride out with the battalion commander to the site of the killing of the religious official and showed how the religious man was out after curfew and bringing rice to the cache. The person was an NVA sympathizer and an enemy of South Vietnam. Cross and his men were released.

The war took a new direction — Vietnamization — and the Army was offering early-outs. Cross took it and returned to Minnesota. His wife, Linda, was pregnant. She gave birth to a boy.

He had considered working a mercenary job in Africa, where he would train officers (which was legal then), but his wife didn't want him returning to combat. He had to get a job.

He decided to re-enter the Army, and he served another 28 years, the final three with the Army Reserves.

He finished as a senior non-commissioned officer. Though he retired as a 1st sergeant, he did achieve the rank

of command sergeant major during a unit drawdown.

The career path took him to Japan, Congo, Thailand, Fort Benning, Fort Bragg again and Fort Hood. His Reserve duty was at Fort Snelling.

He also served a year with a Ranger unit in the 172nd Infantry Regiment in Alaska. He learned to leave his motor vehicle running 24 hours a day, and if he didn't cover his hands at night when taking an outdoor leak, it could lead to frostbite. One time, they stole fish from bears near a river and brought them to the chow hall to cook. The meal was excellent.

He got out in 1995 and worked at a factory. The company was purchased, and the new company offered a 30-year pension to anyone who quit. Cross resigned within 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, Linda worked at US Bank headquarters as a data analyst. Together, they built a house on Big Sauk Lake. They moved there in 2003 and got active in The American Legion with Sauk Centre Post 67.

It all started when he asked for a good place to icefish. In that spot, he caught a single crappie. He brought it to share with a group of guys nearby, and they had bunches of crappie. He got to know those guys in the Legion, and they soon nominated him for a district committee chairman role. He continued on to be district commander and now has a national appointment. He says he is on his way down now and wants young veterans to move up.

"Let the young guys do this stuff. Let's mentor the younger guys," he said.

He has been a Legionnaire for 39 years. About 10 years ago, he moved his membership to Melrose Post 101, where he is today. Public service is important to him. He also is a member of the SAL and Riders.

Linda died of cancer in 2020. They had been married for 51 years. His mother died the same year.

Cross and Sharon Thiemecke had known each other for 20 years.

"I got lonely and started dating her," he said. "She's the smart one of the two of us."

He explained that they found one another to be comfortable.

They got married Memorial Day 2023. They are now Rick and Sharon Cross. She is a member of Bemidji Unit 14 and the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

He brings his son, now a 52-year-old engineer. She brings five grown children, two girls, two boys.

You see them at Legion Family events, whether at the 104th National Convention in Charlotte or the Camporee up at Legionville or the State Bowling Tournament in Dayton.

They are nearly inseparable. When they are separated, it is usually because she has a business meeting, or a presidential duty, and there he is, waiting patiently outside the door to drive her home.



Civilians rarely realize some person standing next to them in a crowd just might have slept outdoors in the jungle, desert or other adverse conditions on behalf of the U.S. government.



Soldiers in Vietnam dealt with swampy, wet conditions.

# Listening Post



From left are Echo Post 204 Adjutant Roger Wing, Eagle Scout Caiden Harms, Past Commander Arden Bendix and Commander John Jones. Harms made flag dropboxes for Echo Post 204 and Granite Falls Post 69 for his Eagle Scout project.



Fairmont Post 36 hosted a town hall luncheon for area veterans and spouses to discuss VA hospital concerns, VA Care in the Community, jobs training and a bill to create a Veterans Center in Mankato.



Fairmont Post 36 honored two veteran members who serve as chaplains. VFW Post 1222 Chaplain Leroy Diekmann, left, received a quilt from Quilts of Valor and Post 36 Chaplain (and Reverend and Major) Cory Germain received the first quilt from South Central Quilts for Veterans.



Minneapolis Falldin Post 555 delivered school supplies to Columbia Academy Elementary School in Columbia Heights. From left are Principal Duane Berkas, Post 555 Commander Donovan Ortel and Post 555 Adjutant Ray Eiden.



The annual National POW/MIA Recognition Day event was held Friday, Sept. 15, in Greenfield's Central Park. It's always the third Friday in September. Community members and Veterans gathered for the 10th year in a row to honor and remember prisoners of war and servicemembers missing in action.



St. Michael Post 567 honored its Div. I Sr. state champion baseball team at a recent meeting. The team went on to place second at the regional tournament in Rapid City, S.D., nearly reaching the American Legion World Series.



Slayton Post 64 in mid-August hosted the American Veterans Traveling Tribute during the Murray County Fair. The tribute was very popular with fair-goers.



Boy Scout Troop 169 and members of Barnum Post 415 watch as the flag that Kaden Carlson provided as part of his Eagle Scout project is dedicated. The flag was dedicated during National Night Out in a ceremony that included a new lighted flagpole and American flag in the heart of the Barnum city park.



A classic Bell UH-1 Iroquois "Huey" helicopter lands at the Murray County Fair.

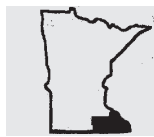


Slayton welcomes the American Legion Riders to the American Veterans Traveling Tribute.



Barnum Post 415 kicked off Military Day at the Carlton County Fair on Aug. 19 with a flag-raising ceremony. The post thanks all veterans and special guests Rep. Jeff Dotseth, Col. Conrad Ross, Moose Lake Post 379 Commander Jerry Telker, national anthem singer Margaret Butkiewicz and all the families in attendance, as well as fairgrounds staff for the flowers surrounding the flagpole.

# District commanders



## 1st District

Mark Maloney



The month of September was busy.

The month started with a fun-filled Saturday at Camporee with many of the Department Legion Family members.

On Sunday morning, Kellogg Post 546 invited me to ride in the Watermelon Days Parade. I was talking with a veteran who was driving the vehicle I was in, and he was telling me how he is experiencing a slow process getting his paperwork for his injuries on his deployment in Iraq.

He also stated he was glad that he had The American Legion helping get the paperwork he needed.

I began to experience the old feelings. I wondered if it was all worth it, the nightmares, the pain, the loss of the life I had before combat.

As the route of the parade went on and I watched the people

standing up and giving proper honor to the flag.

I saw the young kids and the older adults, no matter what their health, standing up.

The kids having fun; the parents trying their best to teach their kids to stand with their hands over their heart.

I was sitting behind the driver and tapped him on his shoulder and told him, "This is why we did what we did, and, yes, it was worth every bit of it."

So as summer ends, remember, winter can be a hard time for some. Let's do our buddy checks. Keep active and remember we are here for each other, just like we were when we were at our duty stations. Remember, as veterans, we do not let anyone fall behind.

the digital gaming for release, which is different from the returning veterans of Vietnam. With that said, keep in mind some posts are changing from the bar scene to a gaming forum trying to get the new veteran families and their kids into the Legion making it a more family-oriented atmosphere.

It was great to see everyone at the Harvest Rally and Camporee and to share our membership

success. Thanks for all your support. We were able to determine monies needed for my Commander's Project and Legionville improvements.

As I write this, I am honored as your commander to attend the National Security/Foreign Relations Organizational Meeting at Camp Ripley. I appreciate the talent availability and willingness that all keeps us working together.



The 4th District held a bus tour on Sept. 13.



## 2nd District

James Olson



Greetings, 2nd District!

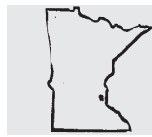
We are about 85 memberships behind from where we were last year at this time. Get your memberships processed as soon as possible. Shake the trees, beat the bushes and get it taken care of! The sooner memberships are processed, the sooner you won't have to worry about it anymore for 2024.

There will be a District Membership Rally held at Post 36 in Fairmont on Oct. 21. It is shaping up to be a good time. More information will be available in the 2nd District newsletter. I hope that we see Legionnaires from all across the 2nd District there! We are working on plans for some more membership rallies in the district through the year. Stay tuned for more

information regarding them.

The Department Fall Conference will be here before we know it. If you have never been to a Fall Conference before, I would highly recommend you consider it. It will be held Oct. 26-28 in St. Cloud at the Kelly Inn. More information can be found on the department website and in the Legionnaire.

I will be getting out to visit more posts in the coming months. If your post is holding an event, please let me know about it, and I will do my best to be there. My cellphone number is 507-525-2957 and my email is olson457@gmail.com.



## 4th District

Teresa Ash



All I can say is: "Wow!"

The 4th District had its first-ever District Bus Tour. We had all our 4th District leadership and were very privileged to have some department leaders, too. This was a great family experience.

We went to the four post homes and then during travel time each family group talked about their programs and how they help veterans, their families and communities.

I would like to thank North St. Paul American Legion Family, Arcade-Phalen American Legion Family, White Bear Lake American Legion Family and Rosetown American Legion Family. They really had a great showing at each location.

Each location's members spoke about how they work as a family to support veterans, their families and communities. We

had members from American Legion posts that did not have a building come to the closest post to be a part of this great event. I am truly honored and so very proud to be part of such a great district.

There are a lot of great things to come. Don't forget to come to North St. Paul American Legion the second and fourth Monday of each month to sit with Gabe Keith and others in the Write Club, where you can meet others like you who like to write down their thoughts.

The next Ramsey County Council and 4th District meeting will be at North St. Paul American Legion Post 39 on Oct. 11. I look forward to seeing everyone there.



## 3rd District

Rod Reifsteck



From the Thundering Third, I would like to reiterate what a whirlwind of knowledge and a gathering of minds it was at the 104th American Legion Convention in Charlotte. Some brief highlights in which I should feel need to be noticed was seeing the Honor Guard Competition and seeing our ROTC cadets who were driven with precision and cadence.

The Service Awards, Patriot Awards and First Responders awards were exemplary of their actions. These were just a few highlights along with the National Commander Jim Troiola's inspired speech and the most penetrating address was ret. Marine Sgt. Maj. Michael Barrett. He was the 17th sergeant major of the USMC and encouraged the audience to get revved up by responding, "Hell, yes!" after each statement like a true drill instructor.

Also, one topic that he emphasized was "Be the One" and "Keep Focused" and making

sure to keep its presence known. With his final message, the audience gave him a standing ovation given the severity of this issue.

Last but not least, I was intrigued by ret. Navy Cmdr. Frank Weisser. His two tours as a Blue Angels pilot and as a stunt pilot for the "Top Gun" sequel was an inspired military advertisement to join up.

As to the 3rd District I have to congratulate all the vice commanders, adjutant and membership chair by hitting the 50 percent mark as we strive towards the 100 percent goal, while still going forward looking for new ways to get more membership.

As I mentioned in my recent Commander's Corner, one class of many that I attended was that all conflicts after the Vietnam War, and returning veterans with the symptoms of PTSD are into



## 5th District

Dick Ward



I just returned from Camp Ripley for the annual gathering of our National Security/Foreign Relations Committee meeting with my fellow district commanders and district NS/FR chairs. This is a dedicated team and a pleasure to work with each of them. Outstanding Enlisted Awards nominations were considered, and the winners will be announced at the Fall Conference in St. Cloud.

Camp Ripley conducts their annual open house for families this same weekend and expected 5,000-plus attendees. The American Legion booth was staffed by all of us, and it is good to meet and greet military families and award or give prizes to the children, of all ages.

Still another event was the groundbreaking for the new

Minnesota Military & Veterans Museum near Camp Ripley. A wonderful facility is planned for that location. It was a busy weekend at the camp.

Thanks to all who are assisting our membership focus. We're working behind the scenes to provide support and direction. Keep up the great work.

Reminder the district meeting schedule is out, and we are planning interesting speakers for each of our meetings. Plan on attending a few to see what is going on in the Fighting Fifth.

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



## 6th District

Anthony Koop



Greetings and Salutations from the Big Sixth!

The National Convention was a wonderful time! I was able to meet many people and discuss many things while learning so much more than I ever expected. It was certainly an eye-opening experience, and I am looking forward to next year in New Orleans already!

I have been busy attending or planning for many functions including Camporee, the SAL Deer Hunt, the National Security Conference and open house and museum groundbreaking at Camp Ripley.

Our membership renewal in the 6th District is on the right path at 61.16 percent as of Sept. 13. Let's keep up the good work and remember to search out those younger veterans and give them a purpose and a "why." They are the future of our great organization and will be the key for our future.

The Harvest Rally was a great success.

Our fish fry brought in over \$2,000 in donations alone! If you haven't been to Camporee or the Harvest really, I strongly encourage you to attend.

Fall Conference is right around the corner (Oct. 26-27), and I hope to see as many of our family there. There is so much information being presented at this meeting and plenty of experts that can help answer your questions and give you guidance on our programs.

I just got home from Camp Ripley from the National Security Conference held Sept. 15-17. There was also the open house & the new museum groundbreaking held on Sept. 17. The crowds were good, and the place was busy all throughout!



## 7th District

Jan Ekert



Hello, Mighty Seventh!

Congratulations to our new national commander, Daniel Seehafer, from the other great state of Wisconsin.

I can't believe another month has come and gone. There were so many things happening in the month of August and well into September.

First, the 104th National Convention in Charlotte, then on to Legionville for the Harvest Rally, followed by Camp Ripley for the National Security/Foreign Relations briefing and the Camp Ripley Open House, followed by the groundbreaking for the new Minnesota Military & Veterans Museum, which will open in 2026.

Please make sure you are reading the rest of the Legionnaire to see what happened at the National Convention. The 7th District did submit resolutions, some of which passed, went to committee for further clarification and others that did not pass.

This was my first experience attending a national convention. How amazing it was to meet Legionnaires from other states!

To all of the district executive officers, area vice commanders, committee chairs and post leaders, I am issuing you a challenge for two things.

1. Area vice commanders, look at the National Guard and Reserve armories in your areas and go and talk to the senior NCO or unit commander and get them thinking about an enlisted soldier in their unit that they would recommend for the American Legion Outstanding Enlisted Awards. At the same time, leave some literature about The American Legion.

Many of the soldiers in the Guard and Reserve don't think

they are eligible to join The American Legion

and some Legionnaires themselves don't know they are. If they have attended basic training, they have a DD214, which shows they were on active duty during that time and are eligible to join The American Legion.

Also, if you would like information on the ESGR award for employers I can get you that information.

2. Posts, I would like to see all of us working on renewing and recruiting members. The challenge I will put out there is that we will meet the membership timelines, which all of you got with your membership packets. If each of us works at increasing our membership, we will easily meet this. I know I sound like a broken record, but, again, with strong numbers, our voices speak louder, and we will continue to show the power of The American Legion and continue to make a difference in lives of our veterans from all walks of lives.

The new Montevideo Veterans Home is my project. I would like to raise \$5,000 to \$10,000 to support our veterans with things that we all take for granted — our daily essential needs. My theme is "Veterans Helping Veterans." When making a donation, make sure you highlight that this is for the Commander's Project in the memo portion of your check and send it to our finance officer.

Call me with any questions you may have.

Remember our strength lies in our numbers.

Read more commanders on the next page.





# District commanders



## 8th District

Larry Pocrnich



*Editor's note: Past 8th District Commander Larry Pocrnich is filling in this month for 8th District Commander Jennifer Havlick.*

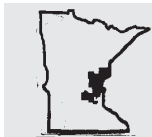
Our district meeting is to be held at Aurora Post 241 on Oct. 7. More to follow on that.

Other officers are needed for the district. If you are interested, call me at 218-969-2460 for more information. I am doing more with the Legion Riders and hometown veterans organizations in the Hibbing area for those who are wondering.

I still take calls on questions for the Super 8th District. Thank you for volunteering.

Hello, fellow veterans. I am writing this so you can find out what is going on in the 8th District. At the present time, the commander is on temporary leave in Colorado. The functions of the 8th still continue.

Keep up the work on volunteering and putting out the word on the work the Legion does. Membership is slow at this time, but I'm sure it will pick up soon.



## 10th District

Matthew Berens



Here you go!

Happy Autumn to everyone in the Legion Family from the Mighty Tenth District! I must admit that I'm still recovering from the excitement of both the National Convention and the Legionville Camporee. I'm not exaggerating by saying I've learned more about The American Legion in the past month than I have in the previous two or three years.

If you've never been to Legionville on North Long Lake northeast of Brainerd, I highly encourage you to check it out. It is the Department of Minnesota's crown jewel with over 600 wooded acres, and pristine lakeshore.

And we, as Legion Family, have been blessed with two events that are open to us there: Camporee and the Legionville Romp.

Camporee, if you don't know, is when any Legion Family members can go camping at Le-

gionville for a very reasonable price. There are cookouts, rallies, games and general good fellowship. The Legionville Romp is in the same category, but is geared towards the American Legion Riders as their annual biker rally.

One thing that I observed at both Legionville and National Convention: Many of the active participants, sadly, will not be around in 10 years. This really drives home the need to both recruit and retain new, younger members. And not just get these people into the post, but actually mentor them to be excited, active members. Get them to the rallies, Legion Baseball games, conventions, motorcycle rides, ruck marches, etc. Our future depends on it, now more than ever!



## 9th District

Steve NaSalle



Hello, Roaring 9th District Family!

As we are beginning our new year, we have a few bumps in the road that need our attention.

First, if your post has not submitted your post reports (PSO or your CPR), please get them in ASAP! These forms are very important for your post's welfare.

If you need assistance filling out these forms, please contact your district vice commander in your area, our district membership director or me. Our district officers are here to assist all of you, so please reach out to us if needed.

Second, if your post is participating or running an event in your area, please take photos or videos, along with the event information, the names of the individuals in the photos, and send them to our district vice commander at-large, Tim Haugen, or me, so we may post them on our Facebook site, or send them to the editor of The Minnesota Legionnaire.

Please continue to reach out to your local veterans for membership and to see how they are doing. Remember "mutual helpfulness" goes a long way. Please continue your Buddy Checks, especially for our older veterans to ensure they're doing well. I can't tell you how much our veterans appreciate your visit or assistance, especially during the holidays.

In addition, as your district commander, I have chosen the Fergus Falls Veterans Home as my fundraising project for the 2023-2024 year, so please help me raise the funds for their many projects.

Also, I have already begun my visits to our district posts and have been asked to speak at upcoming events throughout the year, so if you would like myself, or any of our officers to take part, or speak at your local post events, please let us know as soon as possible, so we may adjust our schedules for your event.

We have started out our 2023-2024 year with great enthusiasm and boots on the ground, so please help us assist you in your post goals as well. We are here for you!

Lastly, please keep our district updated by submitting any changes to your post rosters, so our district officers can reach the right person for updates and assistance.

In addition, sometime in November, our district will host (at least) two training events for MyLegion.org training and updates. The training will be held in our northern and southern areas of the district, so we may have maximum participation for all. Once I have the dates, times, and confirmed locations, your post will be notified by phone, email, and posted on the 9th District Facebook site.

This training is especially important, so please ensure your post has at least one representative for training. Thank you all for your help, and please keep up the splendid work. Our veterans deserve the best we can give.

*"There is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer."*  
— Gen. James H. Doolittle

# Minnesota has a strong history of military service

Continued from Page 1  
become part of the Camp Ripley family."

The new museum grounds will feature the actual top part of a nuclear submarine poking out of the ground.

"I look forward to it in the winter when we will see the conning tower of the nuclear sub looking like it is in the Arctic coming out of the ice," Kruse said.

The emcee for the groundbreaking was KSTP newscaster Kevin Doran, who noted his grandfather Tom Doran is buried at Little Falls State Veteran Cemetery.

The keynote speaker was retired four-star Gen. Joseph Votel, who grew up in St. Paul and was commander of U.S. Central Command from March 2016 to March 2019. Most veterans already know Centcom's area of responsibility covers most of the Mideast, including Iraq and Afghanistan. Before Centcom, he commanded Special Operations, which covers the highly skilled components of each of the branches, such as Delta Force, Rangers, SEALs, 24th Special Tactics, etc.

As a child traveling in a car with many siblings, Votel's father, Henry, would explain the National Guard and, of course, mention the tank along the side of Highway 371.

"The jockeying in the back seat to get the best view began," Votel said.

The first time he came to Camp Ripley was to witness his older brother graduate from the Minnesota Military Academy in 1970 and become a second lieutenant. (The academy's name changed in the mid-2000s to 175th Regiment Regional Training Institute.) His brother's participation in the Armed Forces influenced his career choice. Votel spent 39 years as an officer.

"Minnesota has an extraordinarily rich military history," Votel said.

The retired general mentioned Minnesotans were the first to answer the call of President Abraham Lincoln at the onset of the Civil War and fought to free 4.2 million enslaved people. Minnesota was home to the last surviving Civil War veteran — Albert Woolson of Duluth, who died in 1956 at age 106.

World War II veteran and former Gov. Al Quie died in August, Votel noted. Quie was a Navy pilot. His grandfather was a Civil War veteran.

"In the very early hours of Dec. 7, 1941, Minnesota Naval Reservists aboard the USS Ward fired the first American shots of World War II well in advance of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor," he said.

A month later, Milburn Henke of Hutchinson, as part of the 34th "Red Bull" Infantry Division, was the first U.S. soldier to step foot in Europe in the war, arriving in Belfast, Ireland, on Jan. 26, 1942.

Minnesotans fought at Anzio, stormed the beaches at Normandy, liberated concentration camps in Europe and raised the first flag at Iwo Jima. Helping to raise that flag was Marine Cpl. Chuck Lindberg, who grew up

in North Dakota but resided in Richfield following the war. He is buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery.

One Minnesotan served in three wars and went on to become the highest-ranking officer in the U.S. Armed Forces. Gen. John Vessey of Minneapolis served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1982 to 1985 and is buried at Little Falls State Veterans Cemetery.

Five Medal of Honor recipients from the Vietnam War, he said, have ties to Minnesota.

Votel then spoke of Pipestone's Max Beilke, who was listed as the last American soldier to leave Saigon on March 29, 1973. He was among the first killed in the Global War on Terrorism. He was at a meeting in the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, when American Airlines Flight 77 struck the building. The new VA clinic in Alexandria is named for him.

Bloomington's Tom Burnett was aboard United Flight 93, and after calling his wife during the hijacking, he realized the terrorist's suicide mission and helped lead the passengers' efforts to revolt.

"More than 400 members of the Minnesota National Guard were rushed to the Kabul Airport in August 2021 to provide essential security that finally enabled evacuations of our allies to begin and to bring an end to America's longest war," Votel said.

Minnesota is home to many more stories like these, like Farmington's Cpl. Ben Kopp, who willingly advanced on enemy fire to protect his team of Rangers in Afghanistan and was mortally wounded.

"That is why this groundbreaking is so important. The stories that are told within the walls of the museum that will stand on this spot will teach and inspire the time-tested values of love of country and service to fellow man — values that we know are weaved into the fabric of our land, our lakes and our people," Votel said.

Construction is slated to begin in spring 2024. The state Legislature provided \$32 million to design and construct the facility. The museum's board of directors is more than halfway toward its private fundraising goal of \$10 million to outfit the gallery spaces, classrooms and collections.

New Prague Post 45 Commander Linda Dvorak is on the museum board and is mailing out a request letter to Legion posts and units with charitable gambling. If you wish to request the letter via email, contact her at ldvorak56@gmail.com.

To become a member of the museum or make an individual donation, visit its website at mnmilitarymuseum.org to see donation levels. For a basic membership, send \$30 to Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345.

At 7 p.m. Oct. 23, the museum hosts a virtual event called "From the Ground Up: The Making of a Veterans Museum." Visit mnmilitarymuseum.org and click on "Events" to find the online registration.



A restored World War II-era Navy bulldozer assisted in the groundbreaking Sept. 17 east of Camp Ripley



Civil War re-enactors from the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Inc. provided a color guard in classic Union Army uniforms. Their website is firstminnesota.org.



Five people handled the shovels at the groundbreaking Sept. 17. They are, from left:

- Don Halverson, a World War II veteran of the 168th Infantry, 34th Division, during the Italian Campaign.
- Bob Anderson. He and his wife, Debra, donated 30 acres for the new museum.
- Army National Guard Capt. Takeisha Hunt. Hunt serves as director of the Joint Visitor's Bureau at Camp Ripley.
- Evan Krawczyk, grandson of former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. John Vessey,
- Joe Nayquonabe Sr., an elder of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, a Vietnam War veteran and Purple Heart recipient. Helping him in the photo is former Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie.



# The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 24 Vol. 3

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

Dept. HQ: Veterans Service Building, St. Paul, MN 55155 651-224-7634 October 2023

## Needed: Veterans to help make poppies

We are in great need of veterans who would like to earn a stipend by making our poppies. We have a shortage of helping hands and only a veteran can receive the stipend.

Contact the Auxiliary Department Office for information on signing up to be a veteran poppy maker. You do not need to be in a VA facility. You can make them at home while watching television.

The phone number for the Department Office is 651-224-7634. There is also a toll-free number if you only have a land-line. It is 888-217-9598. Last year we needed to purchase thousands of poppies from other states to fill the need of poppy orders from units.

The Department of Minnesota Fall Conference is Oct. 27-28. Are you registered to attend? See the registration form on Page 3.

Do your members have questions about our programs? Get registered today and get your questions answered. Your department chairmen will be there presenting their expectations on each program and what it is about.

This is a great time for our seasoned members and new members to get together and get questions answered and your unit organized.

This is not a formal meeting but a school of instruction on our programs. Hear firsthand from the department chairmen about what's new, what has changed and what has remained the same.

Bring a pad and paper so you can take some notes. There will

## President's Column

Sharon Cross



be tri-fold presentations and power points for visuals. Feel free to snap pictures of the information if you prefer.

Thursday evening, there will be three short presentations beginning at 6:30 p.m. — one on membership, Girls State and Poppy.

I hope to see all our Legion Family represented. We will paint a wooden quilt block that evening. Get your registration in early as space is limited for the painting project.

Put on your dancing shoes and country attire for Friday evening after our day of learning. You will be introduced to our leadership, and we will have snacks and music to dance and enjoy each other's company. We will finish up on Saturday. So come prepared, bring your listening ears and your inquisitive minds. Don't forget your enthusiasm and of course your dancing shoes.

September sure was a busy month. Camporee at Legionville is always such an enjoyable time with fun and games and fellowship with our American Legion Family. Our first membership rally was held, and even though we do not see our dues notices until Sept. 15, we had a great membership turn-in by the Auxiliary members who know they do not need to wait for that piece of paper to arrive in the mail as a reminder that their dues are due. Rushford Unit 94 had great

turnout and hospitality for their meeting with 1st District officers and members from the neighboring Peterson Unit 526.

The 4th District arranged for leadership to take a bus ride donated by Bloomington Post 550 for a tour of four post in the district. Information was shared at each different post by their leadership on what they each do in their respective communities, and we shared learning information on each ride between posts.

The Rider Romp at Legionville was relaxing, and we held a meeting to discuss the upcoming rides and shared lots of information. There is more to attend, but I must get this article turned in.

So, keep up the good work everyone. Keep those invitations coming. I love traveling around to participate and visit with our members. Remember to bring in those new members, start that conversation and "Be the One to Dance Into The Hearts of Veterans."

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

## POSITION OPENING

### Department Office seeks treasurer

ST. PAUL — 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 complex administrative accounting tasks, applying accepted procedures to manage accounting and financial records, to produce financial records and reports and to support the department executive secretary.

This is a responsible position and requires initiative and independent judgment to ensure the efficient implementation and completion of all tasks assigned. 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 may include out-of-state travel.

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 W, St. Paul, MN 55155 Or emailed to: christie@mnala.org. A job description and application form are available on request.

This position is open until filled.

The reason the position is open is the present treasurer, Cathy Radil, is retiring.

## 2023-24 National Appointments

- Jean Walker, National Executive Committee, Warren Unit 27
- Raleen Tolzmann, Alternate National Executive Committee, Minnesota Lake Unit 287
- Norma Tramm, Poppy Committee Chairman, Cold Spring Unit 455
- Mary Hendrickson, A&E Committee, Northwestern Division Chairman, West Duluth Unit 71
- Rayleen Tolzman, C&Y Committee, Northwestern Division Chairman, Minnesota Lake Unit 287
- Bethany Dickert, Girls Nation Committee, Northwestern Division Chairman, Fridley Unit 303
- Robin Dorf, Junior Activities Vice Chairman, Monticello Unit 260
- Mary Kuperus, Jr. Activities Committee, Northwestern Division Chairman, New London Unit 537
- Carol Kottom, Leadership Committee, Northwestern Division Chairman, Buffalo Unit 270
- Tamara Opland, Membership Committee Member, Duluth Unit 71



Immediate Past President Mary Kuperus, who raised \$30,000 for her President's Project last year, donates \$30,000 to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs to go toward the meditation rooms (chapels) in the three new veterans homes. She is holding the big check in the center and is with MDVA officials.

## New life for historic glass

By MDVA

Editor's note: The following is an edited reprint from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs' weekly email newsletter, Friday Digest.

MINNEAPOLIS — A bit of history is bringing its beauty, color and artistry to veterans throughout Minnesota.

Classic stained-glass windows will be part of the meditation rooms at the three new Minnesota State Veterans Homes in Bemidji, Montevideo and Preston. The refinished windows come from a historic building on the Minneapolis Veterans Home campus.

The new meditation rooms were made possible thanks to the enthusiastic work of Mary Kuperus, past president of the Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary — and many others.

During her one-year term, Kuperus devoted



her statewide President's Project to the new Minnesota Veterans Homes and with a special request to focus on enhancing the meditation space for our future residents. She worked with American Legion Auxiliary units across the state to raise these funds.

In August, she helped deliver a \$30,000 donation to the Minnesota Department of Veterans

Affairs for the meditation rooms project. In addition to the stained glass, the meditation areas will feature special works from local artists.

"In each of the locations, the windows cause everyone to pause and look," said Simone Hogan, MDVA's senior director for veterans healthcare. "It's such a fun story to share that they were recovered from the historic buildings on the Minneapolis campus. It's a testament to our strong and long history supporting veterans in Minnesota."

## Veterans sought to make poppies

Veterans, are you able to use your hands and fine motor skills to do crafts?

If so, would you be interested in assisting the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota in assembling poppies?

The ALA Department of Minnesota is in need of veterans to assist us in making both small and large poppies.

• Poppy kits are provided by the American Legion Auxiliary and come in a batch of 1,000.

• Veterans must be able to arrange for pick up of kits and

return of finished poppies to our Department Office in St. Paul.

• Veterans are paid for the poppies that they assemble on a piece basis.

• Veterans who produce more than 6,000 poppies per calendar year will receive a 1099 (required by IRS).

• Poppies all have a label on them that states "Handmade by Veterans."

Though we have had some wonderful ALA members assist us in a pinch with assembling poppies, we are currently looking to recruit veterans to make

our Minnesota poppies.

• Training will be provided. Legionnaires, please share this with your members.

If seriously interested, please send an email, drop me a note or leave a voicemail message as soon as possible.

Mail: Marsha Bible, Department Poppy Chairman, 5602 West Oakes Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56301

Email: marsha.bible@gmail.com

Phone: 320-492-8977

## THE FOUR CAPTAINS



Membership took sail at the Harvest Rally at Legionville on Sept. 9. From left are 1st Vice President Judy Ackerman, President Sharon Cross, Membership Chair Jenny Nelson, 2nd Vice President Robin Dorf.



2023-2024 Department of Minnesota President Sharon Cross, center, after being installed at the 102nd ALA National Convention in Charlotte.



Bonnie Luedloff from Waconia Unit 150 was recognized at the 102nd National Convention, in Charlotte, at the annual luncheon. Luedloff, near the U.S. flag, is pictured with other Department of Member of the Year recipients.



The Minnesota delegation for the 102nd American Legion Auxiliary National Convention are pictured above. Mary Kuperus of New London Unit 537 chaired the delegation.

## Auxiliary elects new national officers

CHARLOTTE — The 102nd National Convention was Aug. 26-30 in Charlotte. The convention ended with the election and installation of the 2023-2024 national officers. Minnesota was represented by 23 delegates, 13 alternates and many guests.

Indiana's Vicki Koutz, the 2022-2023 national president, presided over the busy five days as the national chairmen gave their reports. Resolutions were considered, and the newly elected and appointed officers were installed:

National President: Lisa Williamson, Alaska  
 National Vice President: Trish Ward, Kansas  
 National Secretary: Kathy Daudistel, Kentucky  
 National Treasurer: Marybeth Revoir, Ill.  
 National Chaplain: Brister Thomas, Hawaii  
 National Historian: Donna Thurman, Kentucky  
 National Vice President of the Northwestern Division: Karen Susag, Montana

awarded to \$100,000, the most the Auxiliary has ever awarded for SOY scholarships.

With your help, the ALA can will help more students fulfill their educational pursuits in preparation to lead in the future.

### 2022-2023 National Awards

Minnesota proudly accepted the following national awards at the 2023 ALA National Convention in Charlotte.

- Americanism, Northwestern Division, Class V, write a narrative of 450-500 words: Savannah Berg.
- Education, Best Overall Department Education Program in the Northwestern Division: Tricia Pagel.
- History, Certificate of Merit Citation Senior Department Historian Submitted the Best Department History in the Northwestern Division: Margaret Keller.
- Junior Activities, Most Outstanding Unit Junior Activities Program in the Northwestern Division: Argyle Unit 353.
- Junior Activities, Best Overall Department Junior Activities Program in the Northwestern Division: Department of Minnesota.
- National Security, Most Outstanding Overall Unit National Security Program in the Division: Faribault Unit 43.
- Poppy, Poster Contest Class V Citation, a child in the Northwestern Division in grades 10 or 11 judged by department: Natasha Crowe.
- ALA Mission Focused Social Media Account, units with active mission-focused social media: Chaska Unit 57.
- VA&R, Citation Best Department VA&R program Department in Northwestern Division: Department of Minnesota.
- VA&R, 2023 VAVS Meetings, Perfect Attendance Award: Jan Benson & Carol Kottom.

### National President Focus

For the 2023-2024 ALA administrative year, the national focus is to increase awareness about the veteran and military suicide epidemic by embracing The American Legion's "Be the One" initiative — be the one to save one.

A few experiences of people close to National President Lisa Williamson have led to this focus for our members. The goal is to destigmatize getting help when it comes to thoughts of suicide.

Williamson will go above and beyond in her role as national president, by not only helping to raise awareness about the Be the One initiative, but also to raise funds for the American Legion Auxiliary's greatest need — Spirit of Youth Scholarships.

Beginning in fiscal year 2024, the ALA will increase the number of SOY scholarships by 49, bringing the total number of scholarships awarded to 67. This will bring the total amount

## Cruising the Sea for Members!

As of Sept. 12

DISTRICT	# of Units	Goal	Period Gain	Membership To Date	Percent of Goal	9/12/2022 Membership Last Year	Difference from Last Year
One	47	3,762	385	385	10.23%	384	-1
Two	71	3,890	490	490	12.60%	420	-70
Three	46	3,882	350	350	9.02%	379	29
Four	7	579	57	57	9.84%	75	18
Five	7	522	35	35	6.70%	49	14
Six	60	5,031	691	691	13.73%	683	-8
Seven	53	2,955	218	218	7.38%	220	2
Eight	19	1,185	146	146	12.32%	152	6
Nine	47	3,348	409	409	12.22%	351	-58
Ten	42	3,812	371	371	9.73%	382	11
1982 Dept	1	404	57	57	14.11%	56	-1
District Totals:	400	29,370	3,209	3,209	10.93%	3151	-58
Group 1 (Even)	199	14,497	1,755	1,755	12.11%	1,712	-43
Judy Ackerman							
Group 2 (Odd)	200	14,469	1,397	1,397	9.66%	1,383	-14
Robin Dorf							

### RANKINGS

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th
13.73%	12.60%	12.32%	12.22%	10.23%	9.84%	9.73%	9.02%	7.38%	6.70%
District #6	District #2	District #8	District #9	District #1	District #4	District #10	District #3	District #7	District #5

## Fall Conference promises to be good time, with Silent Auction, Grand March

ST. CLOUD — The Fall Conference will be Oct. 26-28 in St. Cloud. The event has a lot of information packed into three short days for members to enjoy.

### Annual Silent Auction

It should be bigger and better than ever. Can we count on you? The auction is Thursday, Oct. 26 through Saturday, Oct. 28.

We will be open for set up by 3 p.m. Funds raised will benefit our Auxiliary Emergency Fund coffers. Please bring items to donate such as theme baskets, patriotic items, quilts, pictures, jewelry items, jams, jellies, munchies, pies, bake goods, etc.

The list is endless. Just use your imagination. We will again have \$2 grab bags.

I will have available paper bags so bring along those small items as well. So far, we have one generous donor of some large pictures — of watercolor, wildlife, etc. Also, remember to bring donations of monies from individual members, units, and districts.

A special thank-you gift will be given to individuals donating \$50 or more. Also, we will be doing a district challenge. Challenge will be posted at the auction. Results of auction will be shared on Saturday morning.

### 2 Poppy Contests

We will have cash prizes again and a People's Choice category. Voting for the People's Choice Award will be by cash donations to Department President's Special Project of purchasing two player pianos for the Minnesota Veterans Homes.

Get your Junior members involved, also. Poppy entries must be brought to Department Fall Conference at the River's Edge Convention Center by 10 a.m. Friday, Oct. 27.

### CONTEST 1: Poppy Holiday Display

Using the ALA poppy, create a holiday display of your choosing using our Department President Sharon's theme: "Be The One to Dance into the Hearts of Our Veterans." The white tags should

be removed from the entry. Be creative!

### CONTEST 2: Poppy Craft Project

Using a poppy theme but not using any of our ALA poppies, create a craft project depicting the poppy/poppies using our Department President Sharon's theme: "Be The One to Dance into the Hearts of our Veterans."

This project can be sewn, knitted, crocheted, embroidered, painted, drawn, diamond dotz, etc. The sky is the limit. Let's show that we can promote the poppy without actually using our precious poppies since we are in such short supply.

### Grand March

Friday evening, we will have the Grand March, which will have a country-western theme and dress code. The Grand March highlights officers of the American Legion Family.

It will be followed by entertainment. Please bring as many memberships as you can to Fall Conference.

### Craft Class

Thursday, Oct. 26  
 This is right after the workshop, about 7:45 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 26, to 9 p.m.

Paint your own 12x12-inch wooden quilt block in a flag pattern of red, white and blue, to hang on the wall. This class will be led by Sandy Wersal.

Class level is easy and will be held in the hotel. Class size is limited to first 40. Preregistration only. Cost \$25.

Send a registration and check payable to: Sandy Wersal  
 16667 Co Rd 9NE  
 New London, MN 56273

Cruise Director and Membership Chairman Jenny Nelson and the 10 district membership chairmen have some membership fun planned for Saturday morning. All membership turned in by 1 p.m. Friday will be counted in Saturday morning's report. You won't want to miss it!

The Fall Conference registration form or how to register online on Page 3.

## Learn about ALA education initiatives

By Lorinda Kies  
 Education Chairman

### Give 10 For Education

All you do is collect 10 items of the same thing. The schools and teachers are happy to get extra supplies in the classroom. Think about how many children can't afford all the schools supplies they need.

Wouldn't it be nice to collect 10 pencils, 10 boxes of Kleenex, or whatever you can think of and bring it to a school or two? Your unit can fill backpacks with the items you have collect-ed.

Let's challenge each other to see how many backpacks or boxes of items each unit can get for your schools.

### Boxtops for Education

This program just got easier than in past years. All you must do is download the app and scan your receipt within 14 days and the app does all the work no more cutting boxtops and taking them to the school. There are a ton of products on their long list. Go to [www.boxtops4education.com](http://www.boxtops4education.com).

### Department of Minnesota ALA Scholarships and more

The American Legion Auxiliary, Department



of Minnesota, will again offer eight \$1,000 scholarships to deserving students who wish to further their education, attending any institution of higher learning. They must be a resident of Minnesota or a member of the Auxiliary, Legion or SAL.

There is also the Past Presidents Parley Health Care Scholarship of which up to ten \$1,000 scholarships are available to Minnesota Auxiliary members who are furthering their education in any healthcare field.

Our national organization is again offering four national scholarships this year: Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarship, Spirit of Youth Scholarship for Junior Members, Nontraditional Student Scholarship and Junior Member Loyalty Scholarship. The American Legion also offers a Legacy Scholarship.

All the forms will be in the next unit mailing and are posted on our website [mnala.org](http://mnala.org) under the scholarship tab. Be certain you use the current application forms.

Please share these with your school and members and assist eligible persons to apply. If you need additional forms, please duplicate those you received or request copies from the Department Office.



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