



Annual reports to the Convention of The American Legion Department of Minn.

Commander

I am pretty sure that previous commanders began their year with anticipation and concerns on how it would turn out. Mine also, but I was encouraged early by an event that I attended in June 2024 prior to my election.

I wanted to visit Boys State, and I was so impressed. Not only by watching the boys interact with complete strangers in developing their communities, governments and agenda, but by the dedication and commitment of the councilors and staff.

Then after my election, there was Legion Baseball. Wow! Great teams and play, but again I was blown away by the number of volunteers and their passion for the game and program. The banquet alone had more than 500 people.

A little later came the community events, parades, post dinners and functions and the National Commander's Tour. Whether big or small, I was inspired to see how involved our Legions were and how supportive of our Legion programs that they were involved in. I was so proud to represent our department at each and every one of these visits. You made me feel very welcomed. Thank You.

Speaking of the department, I have known most of the staff for years but as commander you get to know them a little better. Led by our outstanding Adjutant Mike Maxa, they were all so supportive of my programs and assisted me immensely. Their friendship was also greatly appreciated.

I worked our department vice commanders quite a bit to represent the Department of Minnesota when I was unable to attend a particular function. They all answered the call when requested. To the sergeant-at-arms, chaplain and historian, thank you. A special thank-you to the Zimmerman Post 560 Color Guard for being the

Department Color Guard for my year. You made me very proud.

To my membership director: You worked your butt off and even though we didn't do as well as we both were hoping for, I was very proud that you agreed to be my membership director. Besides, it was a hoot being the "Carl and Carla Show" and especially great that we both like cigars and scotch.

And now for the hard part; I have been so blessed to have so many good friends, advisors and family support. I apologize for not naming everyone, but I must name a special few: Bill and Donna Barbknecht for your patience and support, Dan and Mary Ludwig for your guidance, Greg Colby for your council and Al Davis for your knowledge and friendship.

To my favorite Legionnaire, mentor, and love of my life, Peggy; you have kept me grounded and have reminded me that not everyone subscribes to "Life according to Moon." You are my inspiration and reason that I am who I have become.

Again, thank you to all and I look forward to continue serving our Great Department and my fellow Legionnaires.

Dr. Carl R. Moon
Commander

Adjutant

The last clause of our preamble states, "to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness."

The last or 10th clause of our preamble is the most important ideal expressed in our preamble. Our Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund (Fund 85) is testimony the Department of Minnesota has embraced this clause and has a devotion to mutual helpfulness.

To date, from the inception of the program, FY2021, we have assisted 171 veterans with over \$442,000 in direct assistance to our Minnesota veterans. This is not a hand out but assistance to our veterans and their families who are going through rough times. We can all relate at some time in our lives when we could have used a little help. The Assistant Department Service officer (ADSO) and Department Service officer (DSO) review every case submitted to department and they work with the post investigator validating the veteran and their family is needing our assistance.

In a couple of the cases submitted to us, they have found after reviewing bank statements, the applicant has the funds to pay the overdue electric bill, or rent, or whatever they're asking assistance for. Rest assured the ADSO and DSO are great stewards of how the funds from Fund 85 are paid out and they have other resources for sustainability of our veterans. The success of the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund would not have been a successful program within our department without the support and donations from our posts who are embracing the last

clause in our preamble.

Our department has approached a time of change. We are having posts turning in their charters, five to date in 2025, posts selling their post homes and membership in a constant decline. Our membership in 2015 was 84,000. As of 3 June 2025, we are at 52,489.

I was at the national Spring Meetings in May, and at the adjutants' meeting, it was briefed the average age of our membership is now 70 years old. I ask, who is going to fill these shoes? Who will be there to lobby for our benefits and stop our local, state and national elected officials from taking our benefits we have earned away from us?

When new ailments arise from our service to our country, and we are exposed to toxins that cause the sickness, who will be there to add that sickness to presumptive conditions for disabled status? We need our younger veterans to step up, join our ranks and seasoned legionnaires need to mentor these young members. If we don't go and seek out our young veterans and explain why they should join our organization, we will have difficult time surviving and having a powerful voice with our elected officials.

I have heard many times from a young veteran, "What's in it for me?" when asked to join.

My answer is, "If you don't join us and be a voice the benefits, your disabled rating is in jeopardy and they will be gone! The American Legion has the infrastructure and the knowledge to save your benefits. That is what's in for you."

Finally, again, your department staff is here to help our members, posts, and districts. Ninety-nine percent of the time when you bypass department and go straight to national, the national HQ staff contacts me to resolve the complaint, question or concern anyway.

We are lucky to have an

experienced staff and a very knowledgeable staff with having over 70-plus combined years of committed service to your department. We continue to try ways to communicate to our members through electronic means by email, websites and social media. Postage continues to rise and is killing our budgets. But, with that said, if you call and ask to have something snail-mailed, we have and will accommodate that request. Thank you and I respectfully submit my report.

Michael Maxa
Adjutant

Membership

What an incredible year this has been! When Commander Moon first asked me to be his membership director, I was a little hesitant to say yes, but I sure am glad I did! I absolutely love The American Legion, and this was a great opportunity to get out and meet all the talented people we have!

We had a great plan in place this year focused on "Accountability, Communication and Transparency." Nothing is more important than those three concepts, and Commander Moon and I really wanted to spread that far and wide. We started the year out as always, in the top 10 in the county, but unfortunately, we started The Slide.

We have the ability to stop this each year, but somehow it just doesn't get done. We need to use the tools we have and go for it! Everyone keeps talking about getting our younger veterans into the Legion, so let's do it! We have tons of colleges and universities that have Student Veteran Resource Centers that are ripe for the picking.

I have gone to seven colleges and technical schools to talk with our younger veterans and always had positive experiences. Most of them don't even know about The American Legion and how we started the G.I. Bill. As I was sitting and talking with them, they decided it was a great idea and joined their local post. It was so easy!

Another great resource is the armories around our state, with thousands of young soldiers and their families who need to be educated about The American Legion. Most of them don't even realize that they count as veterans under the Legion's definition. Let's educate them.

Go to their family events and show them who we are and what we do. They are hungry to get involved in their communities, and the Legion is the perfect way to do that. Host activities at your posts for the young families and pull them into the fold. Picnics, cornhole tournaments, carnivals, dart contests, etc. Use our social media accounts to advertise and connect with them!

We must modernize how and what we say to them by highlighting how we support mental health, job placement, VA benefits, and advocating for our benefits in Washington, D.C. We can also partner with our local veteran organizations like the VFW, DAV, etc. Younger veterans also love their cell-phones, and there are a couple of programs out there that let you send mass text messages to members who have let their memberships lapse. Other states

have been utilizing these programs with great success. Let's have fun!!

One of our most powerful tools is MyLegion.org. I've taught several classes on it throughout the state, and the feedback has been fantastic. It's intuitive and incredibly helpful for membership management.

Sure, some older members are reluctant to use it, but that's OK — find someone in your post who is comfortable with technology and let them lead. Another major hurdle we're facing is the issue of upside-down posts — those that charge less for dues than the actual cost of membership. This model just isn't sustainable.

Right now, we still have 52 posts in this situation. That's down from 98 at the beginning of the year, which means we've made real progress. That's a win in my book!

One of the highlights of my year was traveling with National Commander James LaCourse. What an inspiring leader! His passion for the American Legion is contagious. Together, we toured southern Minnesota and visited posts I had never been to before. Sharing the message of "Be The One" — focused on suicide prevention and support — was truly impactful.

As we close out the year, we're sitting at 91.4 percent membership. We still need 4,881 members to reach our 100 percent goal. That may sound like a lot — but it's doable. Use the lists of 1982AD and 1982 members. Make the phone calls. Check in on our fellow veterans. Welcome them to your post. Show them that they belong — and that we care.

This has been an amazing year, and I'm proud of the work we've done together. But there's more to do. Let's finish strong and keep the momentum going into the next chapter. I want to thank all the department vice commanders, district commanders and membership directors! You are all amazingly hard workers, and I really appreciate you!

Let's have fun. Let's "Be The One." Let's go for it!

Carla L. Tappainer
Membership Director

Vice Cmdr. 1st & 3rd Districts

First off, I have to say I have learned a lot this year. We, as the American Legion Family, are making a difference in the lives of veterans and in our communities. It's great to see more younger veterans getting involved at all levels in our great organization.

We, as more senior members of the Legion, need to do a good job of mentoring and listening to these newer members' ideas and suggestions. As we move forward with our programs and activities, we may have to re-think how we do some things and come up with different strategies — you know, reinvent ourselves a little bit.

In our efforts to get the proper benefits and justice for all veterans, we are going to need all the help we can get, and that includes the entire Legion Family.
Continued on Page 2



Continued from Page 1

Together we can do so much good. That's when everyone benefits, especially our veterans and our communities. Something else we don't do enough of is letting our communities know about our successes. We need to do a little more bragging!

I have enjoyed this past year, met a lot of new people and made a lot of new friends. I would like to say a big thank-you to the posts I have visited for making me feel so welcome when I was there. I have attended all the department rallies, DEC meetings, conventions and conferences.

I would also like to thank the 1st and 3rd districts for their great efforts with Legion programs, especially membership! You guys are the best!

Donny Skow
Vice Commander

Vice Cmdr. 2nd & 7th Districts

Greetings to the 2nd and 7th Districts and the Department of Minnesota American Legion leadership team and family.

What a wonderful year it has been! It has truly been a privilege to represent both the 2nd and 7th districts and to work alongside you all to help elevate our districts to new heights.

As always, the year brought its share of challenges. Just when you start to feel like you're getting the hang of things, the time comes to say farewell. It's a bit bittersweet to step down as your district vice commander, but I do so with immense pride in all that we've accomplished together and with the deepest well wishes for you and your incoming officers in the year ahead.

Thank you to the many dedicated leaders across both districts who stepped up when needed, offered support and reached out to collaborate. It's been an honor getting to know so many of you — some for the first time — and working as a team to make good things happen. If I missed connecting with you this year or if something fell through the cracks, please accept my apologies. I believe that if we continue working together as a team, there is nothing we can't achieve.

Though I wish my time wasn't coming to an end, I know I'm handing the reins over to another vice commander who will continue to do great things. As we wrap up the year, there's so much to be proud of: Out of the 154 posts across our districts, 24 posts reached or exceeded 100 percent membership goals. Congratulations to each of you! Many others came very close, a testament to the dedication, perseverance, and never-give-up spirit that defines The American Legion.

As we head into the new

year, I encourage everyone to keep pushing forward. Continue those buddy checks, engage in revitalization efforts and reach out to those members who may have fallen off the radar. Remember: while membership numbers are important, the heart of the Legion is the family. Let's continue taking care of each other.

It has been a great honor representing Department Commander Carl Moon this past year — at your conferences, rallies, dinners, local events and conventions. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your journey. I wish all newly elected officers the very best — enjoy every moment. It will be over before you know it.

For God and Country,

Pam Krill
Vice Commander

Vice Cmdr. 4th and 5th Districts

No report.

Vice Cmdr. 6th and 9th Districts

Greetings, Minnesota American Legion Family!

My time as a department vice commander has been a great honor. Representing the 6th and 9th districts was special, and I want to thank all the posts and members for all the warm hospitality.

I am grateful to Department Commander Dr. Carl Moon for the confidence and opportunity to represent him at dinners, the St. Cloud VA 100-Year Celebration and at dedications and patriotic events. The long travels were always rewarded with quality time spent with veterans and our American Legion Family.

I am very proud to be a part of The American Legion Department of Minnesota 2024-2025 team.

Veronica Fernlund
Vice Commander

Vice Cmdr. 8th & 10th Districts

It has been a most amazing year. It was so amazing, it lasted two years — I will long remember and cherish this time. It was my honor and privilege to serve you the American Legion Family as the Department Vice Commander for 8th & 10th districts for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 years.

There are so many members of the American Legion Family to thank for this opportunity. Let me start with St. Michael Post 567, your support and

commitment to me, our fellow veterans and their families is absolutely appreciated more than I can find words to express.

Thank you to the 8th and 10th districts for having the faith, belief and courage to elect me as their representative for this past year. Of course, then-Department Commander Paul Hassing, Department Commander Carl Moon, my fellow vice commanders, our membership director and the rest of the Department of Minnesota officers, staff and committee chairs. You are an outstanding highly dedicated, knowledgeable and professional team. I have learned so much from you this past year.

You have done what we needed to do, to see Hassing's "The Road Ahead" and Moon's "Accountability, Communication and Transparency," using the success and failures of the past to forge a new path forward, so that all the veterans who will follow us one day can continue the great work of this organization.

It has been my honor to serve alongside and with each one of you this past year. Our district and post officer teams are the most devoted, hardest working, creative and tireless individuals. You are the foundation of this great national organization. Your service to the American Legion Family is the most important of all.

You embody the spirit, and mission of The American Legion. You are effective in your local communities. The veterans you reach out to every day know YOU are not going to leave them behind. You give them and their families a hand up when they need it to continue their journey together. Our future generations have you to thank for programs like Boys and Girls State, Oratorical Contest, Baseball, Softball and our very own Minnesota Legionville Education Center.

There are so many more programs to name, I just don't have the space.

My first eye-opening adventure this year was our trip to Indianapolis to attend the national membership conference. I felt like I had gone back in time to college at the base education center. Information we received to have a successful year was phenomenal. I attended the National Convention, our state convention and conference, two district conventions, an SAL convention, Auxiliary Juniors district convention, rallies, participated in Veterans Day on the Hill, many dinners, and lunches, along with being able to visit so many post meetings.

I met and shared quality time with some of the most amazing individuals in our American Legion Family at these gatherings. I hosted a district past commanders' dinner, gave several speeches at events such as the Anoka Veterans Council memorial ceremonies, hosted by Anoka DAV Chapter 39. It was humbling to be able to represent

our department commander at the St. Cloud Veterans Memorial ceremonies this year.

At one of the dinners, a Legionnaire and friend announced my arrival by saying "The Kilt has arrived!"

The Scottish Gaelic saying "Is da thrian tionnsgnadh" means "Begun is two-thirds done." It is similar to the English saying "Well begun is half done." It means that by starting something well, it makes completing the task easier.

William C. Gordon Jr.
Vice Commander

Chaplain

The chaplain position in any organization can be a barrier or a valuable asset to the leadership team. Requirements to provide spiritual support, prayers and presence for awareness that we are mind, body and spirit as humans are contained within the Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies.

Page 16 notes: "The chaplain need not necessarily be a clergyman, but must be a person capable of moral and intellectual leadership and one who gives dignity and respect to the office. The chaplain should be in close touch with the commander and other post officers and should attend all meetings of the post executive committee. The leadership in many post activities belongs by right to the chaplain, and when this office is filled by the right person, the post's usefulness to the community greatly increases."

In 2024, the Spotlight on Spirit podcast hosted through the Department of Minnesota American Legion (riverside pnc dan ludwig legacy may 9, 2024 001 sos legacy 1) began. Although not the responsibility of the Department Chaplain, its aim is to highlight how who we are as spiritual beings is demonstrated in what we do. It also brings to light how the different religious denominations differ; have as their common goal to define purpose and have a relationship with God.

I ran for this office to bring to the Department of Minnesota American Legion a Chaplain Manual. This will be provided for the Department Executive Committee's adoption before my term is completed in July 2025. Chaplains are vital to the spiritual health and this resource will assist chaplains at post, district and department.

What have I done while representing the department as chaplain?

After elections on July 13, 2024, the comptroller informed me that the chaplain budget for the year was \$300. (It used to be \$600 a few years ago.)

Aug. 2, 2024: Attended the Division I Jr. State Baseball Tournament, Bloomington.

Aug. 11, 2024: Attended the Division II Jr. State Baseball Tournament, St. Charles.

Aug. 16-18: Attended and was on-site chaplain for the Women's Vet Retreat sponsored by the DAV, Mt. Olivet Retreat Center.

Aug. 18: Hospital visit for a Legionnaire.

Aug. 25-29, 2024: Attended the National American Legion Convention, New Orleans.

Sept. 5: Hospital visit for a Legionnaire.

July 2025

Oct. 10, 2024: Bellechester Post 598 Steak Fry.

Oct. 11, 2024: Dee Buckley Funeral Service, Arcade-Phalen Post 577.

Oct. 14, 2024: Attended Indigenous People's Day Powwow, Minneapolis.

Oct. 24-26, 2024 Attended Fall Conference, St. Cloud. Co-taught "Be The One."

Nov. 15-17, 2024: Facilitator at National American Legion College (last year of three years), Indianapolis.

Dec. 7, 2024: Attended Pearl Harbor Rally, Spicer.

Jan. 8, 2025: Attended Legislative Mixer, Mancini's, St. Paul.

Jan. 11, 2025: Attended 1st District Mid-Winter, Winona.

Jan. 25, 2025: Attended 3rd District Mid-Winter, Lonsdale.

Feb. 7, 2025: Attended funeral for Lou Michaels, St. Paul.

Feb. 23-26, 2025: Attended Washington Conference, Washington, D.C.

March 5, 2025: Attended Department Commander Testimonial, Walker.

March 8, 2025: Attended Appreciation Rally, Chanhassen.

March 12, 2025: Attended Lanesboro Post 40's American Legion Birthday Party with friends.

March 25, 2025: Attended National Commander Tour Lunch, Pine Island.

April 24-26, 2025: Taught at Minnesota American Legion College, Camp Ripley. (I have served on the Training Committee since 2021.)

April 27, 2025: Attended the 3rd District Joint Testimonial, Lonsdale.

May 2, 2025: Attended and was guest speaker at DAV Women's Vet event, Rochester.

May 17, 2025: Attended 3rd & 4th District Convention (Forest Lake & St. Paul)

Plan on (fingers-crossed): Visiting 6th District Convention and VA facility, 8th District Convention, Department Convention.

With the SAL and Auxiliary chaplains, I plan on co-facilitating the Memorial Service at the Department Convention.

Rev. Kelley Ackerman
Chaplain

Historian

Over the past year, my role as the department historian has been eventful. Throughout the year, I have participated in many events with still more to come.

I have had the honor of attending many events this last year. I couldn't pick one over the other as each event was grand in its own special way.

My job is to record valuable moments and efforts of our members. I am usually around taking pictures as one way to preserve these memories in Photos.

Throughout the year, I have taken over 2,000 photographs.

These images serve as a visual archive of The Minnesota Legion Family for the year. These pictures capture truly moving events and achievements, capturing the moments, ensuring that they can be used for future publications.

To help broaden our reach and engagement, I have been posting on Facebook. We reach younger veterans and community members who may not attend events

Department Committee Reports**Page 2**

in person.

The past year has been fast and furious for The American Legion Department of Minnesota. Listed below are some of the events I attended with the Commander:

- Department Commander Carl's Testimonial 5 April 2025
- Veterans Day on the the Hill was 9 April 2025

- 23-29 March 2025, Minnesota was visited by National Commander James A. Lacoursiere.

- Nov. 8, 2025, Commander Moon attended three veterans programs in Zimmerman.

The SAL John Zgoda Memorial Disabled Veteran Deer Hunt was Oct. 3 through Oct. 6, 2024.

- September 2024 was the final graduation ceremony of the season at Legionville.

As the department historian, I am in debt to everyone for giving me this chance and also for all the wonderful pictures that were sent to me when I could not attend. Thank you for the opportunity to serve in this position.

Karen A. O'Bar
Historian

National Executive Committeeman

July, we elected Dr. Carl Moon of the 6th District as our Department Commander. He has done an outstanding job.

August, we all went to New Orleans Louisiana to the National Convention. It was a very hot and humid climate, as one may expect. While we were there, we elected as national commander James A. LaCoursiere Jr. from the state of Connecticut. Our very own Minnesotan James Kellogg from the Adams Post 146 was elected as our national vice commander. I am proud to say there was a very good turnout from Minnesota.

September, there were many rallies. We went to the Fall Meetings in Indianapolis in early October and the National Commander's Homecoming.

Fall Conference came in late October in St. Cloud, and we were honored to have Kansas NECman Dan Wiley as a candidate for national commander for 2025-2026 join us. Tess and Al Davis along with the Convention Corp. did an excellent job of preparing and conducting business for the Fall Conference.

December was the Pearl Harbor Rally at Spicer. Another outstanding job done by Jody Hassing and the American Legion Riders.

January, we attended the 4th, 5th and 10th districts' mid-winter conferences.

It was a very tough start of the year from late January to mid-May as my wife was ill. Two different local doctors could not figure out her illness. They both repeatedly told us it was a virus and had to run its course. Finally, after getting so very ill, a trip to the ER diagnosed her as having pneumonia in both lungs, due to the negligence of antibiotics in the first place. We are very much appreciated, your Alternate NEC Peggy Moon for filling in for me at the Spring Meetings.

May, we attended the 7th

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2

District Convention held in Elbow Lake. That convention had a very good turnout. As I finish this up, we are starting June. June 7, I spoke at the R&R (Rest and Relaxation) motor-cycle run that was held at Underwood Post 489. This group raises many dollars for our veterans homes in Minnesota.

We look forward to attending the SAL Detachment State Convention June 28 in Morris. Please as always do our Buddy Checks. Help each other out.

Donna and I have enjoyed our travels as your NEC; however, it is time someone else takes over. As the song from Jelly Roll says, “I am not OK, but it will be alright.” I am tired and need family time as none of us are promised tomorrow.

Thank you all for the friendship and chance to serve Minnesota in the NEC capacity. God Bless America and each and every one of you. Good health to all. I will always be here to help all veterans.

See you all in Willmar at the Department Convention July 10-12.

Bill Barbknecht
NECman

Judge Advocate

No report.

Treasurer

I was elected department treasurer at the Department Executive Committee meeting immediately following the Department Convention in Willmar in July 2025. I am a member of the following committees by virtue of my position as department treasurer: Finance Committee, Legionville Board of Directors and Board of Publications (Legionnaire). Financial reports are received and reviewed each month. Thanks to Comptroller Rachel Hill, Adjutant Mike Maxa and the entire department staff for their assistance.

Al Davis
Treasurer

Service Officer

I am really thankful for the chance to come back to the Minneapolis VA Hospital. This place has taught me a lot about how VA care works and the changes that are coming from our current leaders. My time here has helped me understand the unique challenges that veterans face and how much dedication it takes to support them.

While I’ve been here, I’ve been very inspired by the strength of our veterans. Each one who walks through our doors has their own story, and many of them, even when they have tough times, are not ready to make a formal complaint. Instead, they just want someone to listen and understand them. It’s rewarding to see how a caring conversation can truly brighten their day.

There are big changes happening all over the country, and as we work together to fight for what veterans need, it’s really important to trust our leaders. Trust might be hard for some

veterans, especially if they’ve been let down before. But together, we are strong. If we need to unite, we will.

It is really important to understand how trust plays a big role in our leadership. I know that trust can be hard for many veterans to give, especially if they have been let down in the past. They might feel unsure after facing disappointments. But I truly believe that we gain a strong power when we come together as a team.

When we unite as a community, we can make our voices louder, making sure our concerns are heard by those in charge. It’s vital that we stay committed to advocating for each other as we go through this journey together. By supporting one another, we can create a space where every veteran feels respected and confident enough to share their story.

Our united effort can shine like a bright light of hope, helping to bring about positive changes for all the veterans who have served us so selflessly. Together, we can make a real difference and ensure that every veteran knows they are valued and important.

Janet Lorenzo
Department Service Officer

Americanism

Americanism is alive and we all live it on a day-to-day basis as Legionnaires. We need to be a solid pillar in our community, state and nation now more than ever to assist in spreading Americanism back in our great nation.

The programs within the Americanism umbrella has been very busy this past year. See each of their reports below for details.

I would first like to thank the Americanism Committee members Tess Davis and Sy Fix and the subcommittee chairpersons and their assistants for their dedication and all their work over the past year. They are:

- Scouts: David “Chip” Manson
- Boys State: Kyle Oldre
- Community Service: Thomas Clabo
- Education: Don Skow
- Junior Shooting Sports: Carl Wilson
- Oratorical: Jamie Woods & Amanda England
- Safety School Patrol: Rod Reifsteck
- Youth Law Cadet Enforcement: vacant
- District Americanism chairpersons.

Our last meeting was at Fall Conference in St. Cloud with six chairs and five district chairs in attendance.

Consolidated Post Reports, CPR, are the way your post records all the great things you do in your local community and state each year. All posts do something, even if you don’t think you do.

Line 115 is the National Emergency Fund cost to posts and 25 cents per paid member goes to this fund, but you have to report it, and you get the time, 1 hour minimum, for filling out the report on line 125. National rolls up all the CPR’s information and the national commander uses these numbers when he or she annually briefs Congress.

The committee annually presents a Distinguished Service



Certificate, Meritorious Service Certificate and 10 citations for top district post, at Department Convention, to posts with the highest per member cumulative dollars and activities with the Americanism portion of the CPR. Thus, only posts that submit CPRs are eligible.

The Scouting Committee selected the Eagle Scout of the Year in March, and the Education Committee selected 12 scholarship winners in April.

Lastly, I want to thank Commander Carl Moon for this appointment.

Paul Orson
Chairman

Boy Scouts

The Department of Minnesota American Legion Scouting America Committee met March 8 at Apple Valley American Legion Post 1776 for its annual meeting and selection of the 2025 Eagle Scout of the Year. The winner of the state competition receives a \$2,000 scholarship and his nomination package is sent to the National HQ’s April competition in Indianapolis.

The national winner receives a \$10,000 scholarship and three other Scouts receive a runner-up scholarship of \$2,500. Last year, Minnesota’s 2024 Eagle Scout of the Year was selected as one of these three runner-up winners. So close!

The committee reviewed seven Eagle Scout of the Year nomination packages. All were great applicants; unfortunately, one applicant was disqualified because his troop was not sponsored/chartered by an American Legion Post and he did not have a parent or grandparent (unfortunately, a great-grandparent does not count for this requirement) that was a current member of the American Legion Family (Legion, Auxiliary or SAL).

I had the honor attending the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis May 5 and sat in on the Youth Activities Subcommittee. I learned the National Eagle Scout of the Year is Oliver Burke from Texas; the three runners-up winners were Jack DeBissshop from Connecticut, Nicholas Storm from Florida and Morgan Johnson of Oklahoma. I was surprised to learn that only 19 of the 55 departments submitted a nominee for these awards (of which only 15 met the qualification standards). It was suggested by this committee that complete packages are very helpful and that pictures of the nominee and their Eagle Scout project help the selection committee immensely.

In other business:

1. The committee reviewed standard requirements for all nominees. They are:

A. The Scout’s troop must be sponsored/chartered by an

American Legion Post or have a parent or grandparent that is a current member of an American Legion Family.

B. All documents must be included in the application — to include school transcripts, proof of current membership in their scout organizations, and that they have received their religious badge award(s).

Has anyone thought of being a co-sponsor of your local Scouting program?

2. The committee reviewed the two American Legion Foundation funds covering scouting programs: Fund 56 (Boys Scout Scholarship Fund) and Fund 81 (Boy Scout Council Assistance Fund).

Fund 56 is still in need of additional donations and will be included in our annual request for donations from Minnesota Legion posts;

Fund 81 is in decent shape and (while donations would be greatly appreciated) we will not ask posts specifically for donations to this fund).

Thank you to all that support the Eagle Scout of the Year program. Don’t be bashful. Share this information with your local Scouting America troops and let them know you are there to help them submit their own Eagle Scout nomination packages. Any questions? Call your district Scouting committee chair!

David “Chip” Manson
Chairman

Boys State

2024 was another great year for Boys State! Celebrating our 75th year, we had 164 delegates from all over the state along with 36 councilors. We were again located on the campus of the beautiful St. John’s University in Collegeville. Held 9-15 June, we were blessed with terrific weather and great young men to train about government, as many of you know our week consists of a variety of speakers along with the delegates learning and developing their own local and state governments.

Highlights of the week included, but not limited to, speakers, Reps. Lisa Demuth, Sen. Jeff Howe, Retired Justice Paul Anderson, Secretary of State Steve Simon and Gov. Tim Walz. The delegates also conducted several elections including city offices, county offices, state legislature and cabinet-level positions.

This year’s elected governor was Tucker Fournier of Maple Grove High School, sponsored by Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172. Tucker has done a great job serving as an ambassador for Boys State while serving as its governor! On the last day, two delegates are selected from staff nominations to serve as our senators to Boys Nation in Washington, D.C.

This year our delegates were Tucker and Lonne Drew Gilbert of Watertown-Mayer High School sponsored by Watertown Post 121. These young men did a fantastic job documenting their experience at Boys Nation and have really done the American Legion of Minnesota proud!

Posts: Please continue to send delegates to Boys State. It is with your efforts that we are able to provide a high-quality program!

In closing, I would like to add a shout-out to our

50-years-of-service counselor David Way. Dave has been a very valuable member of Boys State for half a century! If you see Dave, thank him for his dedication to this great program. (And ask him if you can purchase a polo shirt.)

Kyle Oldre
Director

Community Service

No report.

Education

The Education Committee’s Scholarship Subcommittee met on Saturday April 26, 2025, at American Legion Post 225 in Forest Lake. Six \$500 American Legion Memorial Scholarships, three \$500 Minnesota American Legion Foundation Scholarships, and two \$1,000 Minnesota American Legion Nurses Training Scholarships were awarded.

The six Memorial Scholarships were awarded to Thea Kolden of Morris, Taylor Davy of Badger, Alison Sansland of Belgrade, Ayla Texley of Hendricks, Myleigh Scheerel of Preston and Cody Shaw of Owatonna.

The three Foundation Scholarships were awarded to Straet Spilde of Halma, Kelsey Jaeger of Mapleton and Griffin Heid of Wilmar.

The two Nurses Training Scholarships were awarded to Grace Skinner of Rochester and Anna Meeker of Green Isle. There are five Nurses Training Scholarships available but we only had two applications this year. These scholarships are available to students enrolled in a nursing program.

All of the scholarship forms are available on our website, mnlegion.org. We congratulate the scholarship recipients and wish them well in their continuing education.

I would like to thank the other members of the selection committee, Al and Tess Davis, Sy Fix, and Paul Orson. I would also like to Department Commander Dr. Carl Moon for this appointment, it’s always a pleasure to serve the Department of Minnesota.

Donny Skow
Chairman

Jr. Shooting Sports

The Minnesota American Legion Junior Shooting Program has made significant strides during the 2024–2025 season, marking a year of growth, achievement and increased participation across the state. As we continue to promote

marksmanship, discipline and competitive excellence among Minnesota’s youth, we are pleased to share the highlights and accomplishments of this past year.

State Match: A Historic First

This year, we successfully held our first-ever State Legion Junior Shooting Match in Anoka. The event was co-hosted by Minnesota Centershots and Vikingland Junior Shoot Club, drawing enthusiastic participation from 44 junior shooters across the state. This inaugural match was not only a competitive success but also a milestone in bringing together our clubs and showcasing the talents of our youth shooters.

Club Participation and Growth

The state currently supports eight active Junior Shooting Clubs, reflecting a strong base of engagement and development. Notably, we welcomed a new club in Fairmont, expanding our reach and enabling more youth in Greater Minnesota to participate in this excellent program.

National-Level Achievement

We are proud to report that Joseph Kor, representing Pipestone Post 6, qualified to compete at the American Legion National 3-Position (3P) competition. The national match selects only the top 15 shooters across the 3P classifications nationwide, and Joseph’s advancement is a testament to his skill and the quality of training provided by our local programs.

Additional Competitive Engagement

Our Junior Shooting Clubs continued to compete in a variety of state and national events beyond the American Legion program, including:

- CMP (Civilian Marksman-ship Program) matches
- USA Shooting-sanctioned events
- NRA Junior Competitions

These opportunities provide our shooters with valuable experience and exposure to diverse competitive formats.

Looking Ahead: 2026 State Match

Planning is already underway for the 2026 State Legion Match, which will be held in Forest Lake. This event will take place in January 2026 and will be hosted by the Gopher Rifle and Revolver Club. We look forward to building on the momentum from this past year and welcoming even more participants to this exciting competition.

Support Through Fund 87

We want to remind all Posts that Fund 87 is available to support the Junior Shooting Program. This dedicated fund exists to assist local posts in developing or maintaining their youth shooting programs. If your post is in need of financial assistance or equipment support, please contact me directly with your request. We will review each submission and determine how the department can help.

- Fund 87 is tax-deductible.
- Gambling funds can legally be used to donate.



Continued from Page 3

• Donations and requests for assistance are always welcome and encouraged.

Conclusion

The Department of Minnesota American Legion’s Junior Shooting Program continues to grow in strength and spirit. With a successful first state match, new clubs forming, and shooters reaching national levels, the future of our program is bright. We thank our volunteers, coaches and supporters who make these achievements possible and encourage all posts to stay involved, grow the program locally, and make use of the resources available.

For further information or to request assistance through Fund 87, please reach out directly.

Carl R. Wilson
Chairman

Oratorical Contest

This year’s Department of Minnesota Oratorical Contest was held on Feb. 22 with both semifinals and finals happening at Anoka Post 102.

The semifinals comprise one contestant from each of the 10 districts of Minnesota. We had seven contestants this year, which is the most in the past four years.

- 1st District:** Matthew Watters, Stewartville Post 164
- 2nd District:** Aidan Moeller, Lake Crystal Post 294
- 3rd District:** Titus Maart, Forest Lake Post 225
- 5th District:** Carolyn Vickers, Falldin Post 555
- 6th District:** Elijah Cox, Walker Post 134
- 7th District:** Alyson Johnson, Willmar Post 167
- 10th District:** Dan Nguyen, Bloomington Post 550

- Congratulations to the winners for 2025
- 1.** Elijah Cox, Walker-Hackensack-Akeley High School
 - 2.** Alyson Johnson, Willmar High School
 - 3.** Matthew Watters, Stewartville High School
 - 4.** Carolyn Vickers, Vickers Home Academy

Elijah went on to compete in the national contest that was held at Hillsdale College in Michigan. That contest was held on the weekend of May 17-18. The national winner was Gina Harjani of Gatlinburg, Tenn.

Great job to all of the contestants for making a great and successful department contest.

Jamie Brooks
Chairman

Safety-School Patrol

No report.

American Legion Riders

The American Legion Riders accomplished a lot this past year. At the first Department Executive Committee meeting, the American Legion Riders Constitution and By-laws was approved. This was due to the great work by:

- Karla (Sunshine) Miller, 1st District representative
 - Matt Berens, 10th District representative,
 - Jill Davis, 5th District representative
 - Shawn Davis, secretary
- The American Legion Riders rode around southern Minnesota in late July raising money for Fund 85. Despite this being the Department Commander’s Project and the SAL Detachment Commander’s Project, the Riders still raised over \$37,000. During the run, we visited the new veterans home in Montevideo and the new Veterans home in Preston.

We started at Pipestone Post 6 and ended at Bayport Post 491. For the 2025 Run, we will start in Forest Lake on July 23 with the kickoff party, overnight in McGregor and Walker, and end in Paynesville about 5 p.m. for the ending party.

In August, the Riders rode for the Legacy Run for the Rider’s national mission — Veterans & Children’s Fund and turned in \$9,500 at the National Convention in New Orleans. This run was hosted by Slayton Chapter 64. The 2025 run will be Aug. 16 and will be hosted by the Walker Chapter 134.

The riders grew by four chapters this past year, and I learned just tonight that another chapter was approved to form by Plummer Post 623. I am so excited to watch the Riders grow. Though we had a lot of success this year, we also experienced a great loss. Steve “Sully” Sullivan was the founder and the first chairman of the Minnesota Legacy Run. He was chairman for 10 years and was instrumental in leading us to turn in over \$1 million in support of the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund.

This will be our second year of Chapter Consolidated Reports. I am looking forward to providing details of what all the American Legion Riders do for our veterans, our families, and our communities.

Thank you all for your support during these last two years as director. I have enjoyed visiting with everyone and representing the Minnesota American Legion Riders.

Jody Hassing
Director



Armed Forces Service Center

The Armed Forces Service Center is open from 8 a.m. to 10:45 p.m. We are in urgent need of more volunteers so we can reopen 24/7. (Which is what it was before the pandemic.)

Please go online to: www.mnafsc.org/volunteer-ii.

Thanks for considering volunteering and telling your friends about the home away from home for traveling military at MSP Terminal 1.

Joe Jansen
Chairman

Blood

The Gift of Life

Donating blood symbolizes a helpful and responsible gesture not only to the person in need but also toward society at large.

Advantageous for the Body

Blood donation is not at all harmful for the body; rather, the four or five pints of blood that can be donated every year by both men and women ensure that you remain fit and fine.

Firstly, the cell depletion that occurs due to blood donation forces the body to produce new cells. Plasma, the fluid portion of blood, is replenished within 24 hours. Red cells need about four to six weeks for complete replacement. Secondly, the body is armed against a host of diseases ranging from liver and heart problems to even cancer. This benefit comes from depleting extra iron deposits through blood donation. Thus, donating blood is, in another way, a step toward revitalizing your body. Thirdly, giving blood is an act of selfless volunteerism, proven to uplift one’s psychological well-being. Knowing you are helping others has been shown to have a positive effect on happiness.

Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood. Three people out of 100 donate. Spring into action to change this stat! More blood donors are needed to help patients.

The American Legion considers this program so important it falls under the jurisdiction of national security.

- 1st District:** 25 posts reporting total of 1,124 units.
 - Leon J. Wetzel Post 9: 344 units
 - Waseca Post 228: 234 units
 - Gittens-Leidel Post 595: 168 units
- 2nd District:** 18 posts reporting total of 1,721 units.
 - Seifert Bianchi Post 132: 350 units
 - Victor Hirsch Post 263: 319 units
 - Lee Prentice Post 36: 253 units
- 3rd District:** 17 posts reporting total of 3,020 units
 - Chanhassen Post 580: 352 Units,
 - Montgomery Post 79: 300
 - Waconia Post 150: 240 units.
- 4th District:** Two posts reporting total of 82 units.
 - Rosetown Post 542, 77 units.
 - Business & Professional Post 450: 5 units
- 5th District:** Nine posts

- reporting total of 59 units.
 - Hellenic Post 129: 19 units
 - Mpls. Post 1: 12 units
 - Mpls.-Richfield Post 435: 11 units
- 6th District:** 21 posts reporting total of 1,355 units.
 - Kriesel-Jacobsen Post 560: 730 units
 - Melrose Post 101: 350 units
 - Richard Howard Ferrell Post 46: 127 units
- 7th District:** 20 posts reporting total of 963 units.
 - Willmar Post 167: 288 units
 - Spicer Post 545: 108 units,
 - Kerkhoven Post 223: 115 units.
- 8th District:** Seven posts reporting total of 54 units.
 - Cloquet Post 262: 40 units,
 - Grand Marais Post 413: 12 units
 - Virginia Post 239: 10 units,
- 9th District:** 10 posts reporting total of 578 units.
 - Bagley Post 16: 320 units
 - Roseau Post 24: 26 units
 - Moorhead Post 21: 172 units
- 10th District:** 15 posts reporting total of 1,084 units
 - Edward B. Cutter Post 102: 350 units
 - Hanson-Hayes Post 178: 224 units
 - Coon Rapids Post 334: 155 units,

This year the **Department of Minnesota** had 144 posts reporting with a total of 10,040 units. Last year we had 126 posts reporting with a total of 7,205 units.

Thank you to all the district chairmen for taking their time and energy to support this life-saving program of The American Legion.

Terry L. Larson
Chairman

Children & Youth

Minnesota American Legion Children & Youth programs are guided by health and safety, home stability, character and opportunity of all children of veterans. We are improving the conditions of all children and youth in our communities with concern for maintaining the integrity of the family home. Our posts are preventing social and physical ills of children and youth where possible, using services of, and cooperating with sound organizations and agencies for children and youth. We strive to maintain a balance in our programs that provide for the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs of children.

Karen Welanders
Chairman

Convention Corporation

The Department of Minnesota Convention Corp. elected Tom Fernlund president at its annual

July 2025

Department Committee Reports

Page 4

meeting at the Department of Minnesota Fall Conference held Thursday, Oct. 24, 2025, in St. Cloud. Jim Mertens resigned as president due to work commitments.

Current members of the Convention Corporation are President Tom Fernlund, St. Cloud; Vice President Tom Schottenbauer, Minnetonka; Secretary Jon Olson, Atwater; Treasurer Al Davis, Princeton; Trustee Don Hayden, Le Center; Trustee Richard Grobe, Lake City.

The Convention Corporation approved changing the Department Convention and Conference registration fee from \$15 to \$20 starting with the 2025 Department Convention and Conferences. Late and door registrations will be \$30.

The Department Fall Conference is scheduled for Oct. 23-25, in St. Cloud and will be the fourth of a five-year commitment of hosting the conference at the Kelly Inn.

Discussion for future Fall Conference locations will be discussed at upcoming meetings. The Department Convention is scheduled for July 10-12, in Willmar. This will be the second of a five-year commitment to have the convention at the Willmar Conference Center.

We look forward to seeing everyone soon at the exciting and informative Department of Minnesota American Legion Family events.

Tom Fernlund
President

Employment

The Employment Committee holds an annual contest to recognize employers who employ veterans. It is the Minnesota American Legion Employer of Veterans Award. We have three categories: large, medium and small.

This year, we had one nomination. It was in the medium category. To be sure, it is a very good nomination, and it was from Bud Stimmler of Clear Lake Post 354.

The Minnesota American Legion Employer of Veterans Award will be awarded to Guardian Fleet Safety at the Department Convention. You probably have passed by this company outside of Clear Lake on the way from the Twin Cities to Camp Ripley. If you miss your turn at Monticello to cut over from I-94 to U.S. Highway 10, you then take the Clearwater-to-Clear Lake way, which is Highway 24. (It is less crowded anyway.)

You then pass a business on the left side of the road that has all kinds of cop vehicles. This is Guardian Fleet Safety, 7020 State Hwy. 24, Clear Lake. The company was established in 2016, and it assists first responders with vehicle acquisition, computers, cameras, emergency lights and sirens, graphics, window tint, repairs, special packages and inspections. It offers free pickup and delivery, too.

The company hires an average of 17.3 percent veterans. It has 52 employees and nine are veterans. Last year, it hired 19 people, of whom three were vets, for a percentage of 15.

I look forward to presenting this award at the convention. Thank you to Commander

Carl Moon for giving me this privilege.

Luis Campero
Chairman

Family Hospital Association

The American Legion Family Hospital Association (ALFHA) consists of nine members:

- Gary Weaver, American Legion
- David Arend, SAL
- Anne Steffen, Auxiliary
- Rick Cross, American Legion
- Michelle Weaver, Auxiliary
- Tom Fernlund, American Legion
- Carl Moon, Department Commander
- Judy Ackerman, Department President
- John Weiss, Detachment Commander

Other people involved are Roger Stoick, who is our claims coordinator, and Rachael Hill, the department comptroller.

It has been a slow year so far since our fall meeting. We have completed one case donating a total of \$4,000 to our Legion Family members.

So far this fiscal year, we have had income from dues and donations totaling \$38,567.71 and expenses totaling \$18,707.84, leaving us a profit of \$19,859.87.

I hope to see some of you at our annual meeting during Fall Conference.

Gary Weaver
President

Finance

The Finance Committee held three meetings for three fiscal year. We met in July at the Department Convention. We met in September at Elk River Post 112 to set the budget for the fiscal year. We also met at the Fall Conference in October to take care of a few remaining items.

We go through each committee request sometimes we have to cut the request. It is not easy thing do, but we have to look at the whole picture. I want to thank the committee members for their time and all their hard work.

I have served on the Finance Committee for the last five years. I want to say this: The meeting in September takes all day. Commander Carl Moon attended all the meetings. I want to thank Comptroller Rachael Hill for her advice and counsel; plus all the hard work she does for this committee and The American Legion.

Richard Wog
Chairman

Internal Affairs

Nothing to report. The Internal Affairs Committee is “at the ready” to investigate for the Department of Minnesota.

Steve Fosness
Chairman

Law & Order

I would like to thank Commander Carl Moon for asking me to be chairman for the Law

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 4

& Order Committee and my fellow committee members for their continued service.

The Law & Order Committee are:

- Pat Logan, Bayport
- Susan Edwards, Brainerd
- Art Hart, Champlin

Committee reviews and selects nominees to move forward according to judging guidelines put forward by the American Legion criteria for Law Enforcement Officer & Firefighter of the Year.

Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

Submitted by District 9, Moorhead Post 21, we are proud to introduce Minnesota State Patrol, Trooper Zachary Gruver as Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

Trooper Gruver received the “Meritorious Service Award” for stopping a runaway SUV and saving the life of its 18-year-old driver. Dispatched on an SUV malfunctioning and reaching speeds up to 113 mph, when all attempts to stop the vehicle failed during the 20-minute high-speed rescue, Zachary made the decision to speed ahead of the SUV and use his squad car’s brakes to stop the SUV.

By phone, a deputy instructed the teenager to hit the rear of the squad. Upon collision and triggering the vehicle’s Crash Detection Technology, Trooper Gruver applied his brakes, taking the impact and safely bringing both vehicles to a stop. Trooper Gruver and the driver received national attention when they were reunited on the “Good Morning America” morning TV show. (The dash cam capturing this heroic event is breathtaking)

Trooper Gruver serves at the Moorhead Station in Detroit Lakes District 2900. He is certified as a drug recognition expert, specializing in recognizing those driving while high on drugs. Zach actively volunteers in Moorhead Community Outreach with Cops & Kids Hockey, Sled Hockey and Shop with a Cop.

Firefighter of the Year

Submitted by District 2, Sleepy Eye Post 7, we are proud to introduce Firefighter Shaun Heiderscheidt as Firefighter of the Year.

Shaun Heiderscheidt has served with the Sleepy Eye Fire Department for 12 years, moving through the ranks and attaining the position of Assistant Fire Marshal.

Shaun has made education his No. 1 priority and is first to volunteer to attend any school offered on fire education. Completing his Level 1 Training Certification allows Shaun to teach/train department classes. Shaun is a perfect example of keeping a cool head and letting training take over, exhibited from his expertise with structure fires, grass fires, vehicle extrication and rescue situations.

Community-driven, Shaun teaches fire safety in the local schools and in one case what he covered was used in action by one of the school kids at home when he put out a kitchen fire. Shaun’s leadership makes the department stronger. Shaun’s knowledge and training makes every one on the department better. Shaun’s dedication to exercise pushes the department to stay in shape. “Just ask

him about bench-pressing 325 pounds at the Minnesota Bench Press Championship

It’s an honor to bring these nominations to the Department of Minnesota. It’s a privilege to serve, for God & Country.

Patrick Logan
Chairman

Legionnaire Insurance Trust

It was a very good year, considering a decline in membership. Minnesota received over \$48,000 back in dividends from Legionnaire Insurance Trust at the annual meeting.

I thank Mary Hanson and Wayne Beierman for their help on the committee. Please check out all the products that LIT has to offer. One product that is available for example is “Device.” That is a product that protects you and all of the devices you may have, such as cell-phones, iPads and computers.

Other products that may interest you are a dental insurance, long-term care, Life Line medical alert service, emergency assistance plus, ID resolve, travel insurance, (a free) accidental death policy of \$5,000 if you are on Legion business, \$1,000 if you are on family or other business and have an accident.

However, you must sign up for this free policy. Hospital Help Plan and many other great packages. Please check into them. Visit www.TheLIT.com for questions or call 800-235-6943.

I thank all our department staff for their help. Thanks to Editor Tim Engstrom for putting ads in our Legionnaire paper. Thank you, Commander Carl Moon, for this LIT appointment.

Bill Barbknecht
Chairman

Legionville

At the Oct. 19, 2024, Board of Directors meeting, yours truly was re-elected as president. I want to thank the board for its continued faith in me to continue serving as president. I especially want to thank 6th District Commander Frank Grittner for re-appointing me as the district representative to Legionville.

In effort to keep expenses down, our last Board of Directors’ meeting was conducted on March 18, 2025, via Zoom. All district representatives were present, except for the 4th. Department commander, president, SAL commander and ALR director were also present and gave greetings.

The previous paver project was finalized and the two missing pavers were ordered and received. Being that no other pavers were found to be missing, the project was closed. There was no report or action taken on the previously

approved Donor Wall Project.

The dorm flooring project, at an estimated cost of \$50,000-plus, is on hold, awaiting response from Home Depot’s acceptance to donate the required material. Camp Manager Adam Felton will follow up with our request.

The big new No. 1 project will be the replacement of the sewer lines to the dorms and cabins. Dorm 7’s line already had to be replaced at a cost of \$1,500. With inflation, the estimated cost for the remaining units is \$2,000 each.

We are still looking for a sponsor for replacing doors in the main building. We also need a bagger system for our mower.

Future needs are: a swing security front gate, a side-by-side ATV and turf tires for our tractor.

Six camp sessions are scheduled for 2025 beginning June 15-20 and the last one on July 27-Aug. 1. Our troopers have a presentation already established for firearm safety and are looking forward to adding this training. They recently informed us that they have been approved to use their dedicated \$5,000 Legionville Fund for the purchase toward two four-wheelers for safety training. They have requested that Legionville purchase an additional two machines so there would be age-appropriate sizes available for campers to train on. We are awaiting a response from Polaris on a grant request for the additional machines.

Other scheduled events include: Work and Play Weekend was May 15-18, 2025, (and even though it was cold and rainy a lot of work was completed and even a little fun was had), Junior Fun Weekend Aug. 8-10, 2025, Camporee Sept. 4-7, 2025, ALR Romp Sept. 11-14, 2025, Inaugural SAL Turkey Hunt Sept. 28-30, 2025, and the John Zgoda Deer Hunt Aug. 3-5, 2025.

As of May 31, 2025, Legionville’s revenue exceeded expenses for FY by \$30,252. Cash on hand balances were: Cash: \$123,031.01; Dedicated Funds: (\$19,514.00); Operating Balance: \$103,517.01

Donations as of May 21, 2025, were \$47,328.91. The break down was \$23,115 from posts; \$5,320 from units and \$18,893.91 from miscellaneous. My special thank-you to 3rd District Commander Joe Tappainer for having Legionville as his Commander’s Project.

The next board meeting is scheduled for 11 a.m. Oct. 18, 2025, at Legionville.

Carl R. Moon
President



Legislative

It was an honor to again serve as your Legislative chair, along with committee members Alexandra Fleming, Logan LeClaire and Douglas Borgeson. All four of us work veteran benefits claims for our day jobs. CVSOs and GVSOs know veteran law at the local, state and federal level intimately, and we know when the law is not functioning well enough to deliver the benefits our veterans deserve.

We brought back our social mixer for a second year in a row, the week before the start of the legislative session at Mancini’s in St. Paul where we invited every state lawmaker to come down to talk with us about our issues over appetizers. We did not have to work as hard to garner interest from lawmakers. We simply invited all via email, and they showed up! Legislators from opposite sides of the aisle took selfies with one another in front of our Legion logo VIP wall and showed an element of collegiality that unfortunately deteriorated later in the session, with the power struggle over the majority in the House for the first few weeks of session. But we know helping veterans is an area of agreement for most.

We also got down into the trenches more than we have in the past and utilized our Voter Voice tool more broadly. We wrote out bill language for every issue on our legislative platform, contacted lawmakers we thought would make good chief authors, and wherever possible, aligned bipartisan slates of co-authors to maximize support. Then, we called and emailed committee chairs to request hearings and contacted lawmakers to request their support whenever a vote was imminent. We had a Voter Voice campaign aligned to each platform priority and each related bill. We sent thousands of messages to state representatives, state senators, the governor and lieutenant governor.

We had several key accomplishments this year. Our CTF priority to address food insecurity across Minnesota was successful, with \$300,000 of new funding designated to LSS CORE to provide free meal services to veterans in need outside of Hennepin, Ramsey and Anoka (which is already covered by Metro Meals on Wheels).

For a while, we thought we were going to lose \$5 million of veteran homelessness funding, as the House Veterans Omnibus Bill cut this funding, while the Senate funded it at normal levels. In conference committee, the funding was restored, and we should soon be able to continue the work with our state homeless programs as usual and hope to reach an effective end to veteran homelessness across Minnesota, with Ramsey being the final county to reach the milestone.

We brought major awareness to veteran benefits fraud with our claim sharks bill. The bill was met with much misinformation and misunderstanding, perpetuated by national lobbyists, hired by claim sharks such as Veteran Benefits Guardian. We believe the foundation is strong to successfully pass a Minnesota claim sharks bill in 2026.

I’d like to thank everyone who traveled to Washington,

D.C., for the Washington Conference. Each year, I bond with those who travel as we work together to navigate meaningful conversations with our members of Congress. I wish my successor Paul Hassing the best of luck in this role, as I step away for other things. I am super grateful for all the opportunities I had for the past three years.

Dr. Kristy Janigo
Chairman

Media & Communications

No report.

National Security & Foreign Relations

Our organizational meeting was held at Camp Ripley last September. Most district commanders and district chairman were in attendance. This meeting is essential to having a successful year. We are able to tour the instillation and learn what happens there. We look forward to the completion of the new museum. We had a briefing by the family support group that works with the families of those stationed and deployed from there.

The highlight of our year is awarding of Enlisted Person of the Year at our Department Fall Conference. We are always in need of more applications each year. We simplified the process by putting the application on line this year in hopes of more applications.

The Civil Air Patrol is one of the programs we support. This year we were able to increase the scholarship amount. We were asked to attend their Department Convention for the first time this year and look forward to working more closely in the future.

We thank all the Posts for their continued financial support that makes continuing our ROTC and Jr ROTC scholarships.

As part of the annual membership awards program, each post visit to an armory or military unit needs to be recorded and sent to our department membership chairman.

Our committee has had another busy year and we look forward to your continued support.

James Kellogg
Chairman

Pheasant Feed

This year was a good year for dinners with the three new homes having their first dinners.

I was able to make a visit to the Minneapolis and Silver Bay veterans homes. I was able to make donations to several of the homes for some of their needs. I was able to visit Bemidji, Preston and Laverne for dinners and invited others.

Please visit the homes and check them out they are great places to visit and take care of our veterans is great. I also was invited to Fergus falls for their deer feed and Luverne for theirs. Thanks to everyone for your support.

Thanks to Commander Carl

Moon for this appointment.

Glenn Mueller
Chairman

Resolutions Assignment

The Resolutions Assignment Committee is composed of three members, Chairman Joseph Bares of Jordan, Cliff Newman of Blaine and Jim Munson of Richfield.

Responsibilities of the committee include the review of all resolutions submitted to the Department Convention for consideration. After reviewing all resolutions, the committee assigns them to a convention committee for action of approval, rejection, or amend and approved. During the convention each committee reports on its actions to the delegates, who have the final authority on all resolutions.

The Resolutions Assignment Committee monitors all reports and prepares a final report on the actions taken by delegates to the convention.

Thank you to Commander Carl Moon for the confidence in us by appointing us to this committee. Also, thank you to the department staff that assists us greatly in getting all the resolutions properly completed prior to the presentation to the delegates at convention.

Joseph Bares
Chairman

Sons of The American Legion

A special thank-you to Jason Hruza, who is the assistant advisor to the north, and Ted Berg, who is assistant advisor to the south. These men are both highly active dual members of the American Legion Family.

I would like to congratulate Detachment Commander John Weiss, his officers and committeemen for a great year. The Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Minnesota has been an outstanding force in the Minnesota American Legion Family. Many posts in Minnesota would not be alive today without the help of their squadrons — proving if you want something done, give it to the Sons.

I would be happy to announce all the new officers this year, but the election is not for a month yet, so if you are not attending the Detachment Convention in Morris, stay tuned for that announcement.

Even though I am a dual member, it is always an honor to work with the members of the SAL in the Detachment of Minnesota.

Finally, I want to thank the staff at Department Headquarters for all their help throughout the year. And thanks to Commander Carl Moon for the appointment to this position.

Gary L. Weaver
Advisor

Sports: Baseball

It was another banner year
Continued on Page 6

Continued from Page 5

for American Legion Baseball in 2024, and we are looking forward to a similar year for 2025. We have over 405 teams registered, a new record, but we landed on 377 after rosters were turned in. (The next largest department was Pennsylvania with 281 teams, followed by Nebraska at 276.)

One of the biggest challenges the Baseball Committee faces is the teams that decide to register late. This causes scheduling and planning issues throughout the entire program.

A major challenge we have faced in recent years has been rising costs of housing players and coaches in hotels during state tournaments. This made hosting especially expensive for cities in Greater Minnesota. This offseason, we increased the housing radius to 60 miles and improved the terms of our contracts with tournament hosts.

The biggest change to our Baseball Committee for this season is that Marshall Dalziel of Wayzata became our new registration coordinator, taking over for Vice Director Brandon Raymo. Last season, Jack Strong of Buffalo became our new director for the Division I Junior State Tournament, replacing Past Director Mike Perry.

The 2025 season will have five champions from 2024 hoping to repeat. Farmington will look for its second consecutive title in Division I Senior, as will Becker in Division I Junior, Holdingford in Division II Junior, while Sleepy Eye in Division II Senior seeks a threepeat. Holy Family of Victoria in Division I-A will be looking for its second straight title.

State tournament hosts for 2025 are: St. Michael for DI Senior, Bloomington for DI Junior, Ely for DII Senior, Hayfield for DII Junior, and Burnsville for DI-A.

Scheels of St. Cloud continues to be our state tournament sponsors. We appreciate their continued financial support of Minnesota American Legion Baseball.

Find our rulebooks, rankings, scores, the Code of Sportsmanship and more on our mobile app. Just search in the App Store or on Google Play for “Minnesota Legion Baseball.”

Minnesota American Legion members can be extremely proud of the fact that no American Legion state baseball program in the country comes close to Minnesota in the number of players served by our program, and the morals and ethics it seeks to teach young people.

Randy Schaub
Director

Sports:
Bowling

The Bowling Committee organized the 79th annual Minnesota State American Legion Family Bowling Tournament.

Again, this year, Osseo Post 172 hosted this event. The tournament was held March 29 through April 27 (Saturdays and Sundays) at Sundance Entertainment Center in Dayton. The tournament for 2026 may be there again if we do not receive any bids from other posts. Please contact me, David Wendt, at 262-227-7621 if you



are interested.

We were honored this year to have representatives from all sides of The Legion Family be with us on the opening weekend to throw out the “ceremonial first ball.”

Department Vice Commander Bill Gordon was representing Department Commander Carl Moon. Representing the Legion Auxiliary was President Judy Ackerman. Representing the Legion Riders was Director Jody Hassing, and representing the SAL was John Weiss.

Total results are on Osseo Post 172’s website and will be printed in an upcoming Minnesota Legionnaire. Winners this year are:

- Men’s Team:** Excelsior Post 259
- Auxiliary Team:** Milroy Unit 274
- Men’s Doubles:** Trent & Tom Mullenbach, Stewartville Post 164
- Auxiliary Doubles:** Donna Telecky and Ashley Miller, Hutchinson Unit 96
- Men’s Singles:** Dale Lipovsky, St. Paul Hamline Post 418
- Auxiliary Singles:** Patty Highman-Moe, Rushford Unit 94
- Men’s All-Events:** Dave Walz, Waite Park Post 428
- Auxiliary All-Events:** Diane Sik, Milroy Unit 274

Also, this year we had one bowler throw 12 consecutive strikes for a 300-scratch score. Congratulations to Alex Eide, Mahtomedi Post 507

Form your teams and watch for the 2026 entry forms on the department website this fall. We expect the tournament to be held starting March 28 and 29, 2026.

David Wendt
Chairman

Sports:
Fastpitch
Softball

Minnesota American Legion softball has broken the 30-team mark. We actually have 32 teams with one league of 14 teams that is playing an all-Legion schedule rather than independently.

Our website took a step back this year as what SportsEngine considers an upgrade is a downgrade for large organizations like ourselves.

However, we are working through the kinks and doing things old-school.

Coaches are on top of things and the majority of players have already registered before our June 15 deadline. You can still find rankings and scores on our website: minnesotal legionsoftball.com. Hopefully I will get schedules put on there if I receive them and time allows me.

The registered teams are divided into seven geographical substates, and the champions

will advance to the state tournament in Bemidji July 26-28.

Our Fastpitch Softball Committee is small but slowly growing. It really needs more people with a passion for softball and connection to the Legion to help grow this program in the future. We need district commanders to appoint softball directors, just like they appoint baseball directors, so they sit on our committee.

Our committee has one director and two vice directors, all appointed by the department commander to three-year terms. We have Vice Director Luann McMahon, Vice Director David Thompson and me.

Then, we are supposed to have one softball director from each district. Presently, we have Tom Fernlund (6th District), Hal Meyer (7th District) and Steve Fosness (2nd District). We need district commanders in the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th and 10th to appoint softball directors.

Our committee has done a lot to promote the values of the Legion and the game of softball. I believe we could see a bigger influx of teams next year as the word continues to spread. We had a lot of late spring interest from teams and leagues around the state.

However, a few more people on board in areas of our state where we don’t have teams could really help.

We would like to thank all those who have donated and supported this program to get it off its feet and continue running. I believe we are about halfway to the mark needed to make this a national program from talking to other state directors.

God bless our Minnesota American Legion veterans for making this program available to the girls of Minnesota, and thank you for your service.

Michael Arvidson
Director

Strategic
Planning

First, thank you to Commander Carl Moon for allowing me to continue to be a part of this committee. I would like to say thank you to the team members who made this year so productive: Sarah Sturner, James Olson, Barrett Kirchenwitz and Matthew Berens.

Due to the geographical separation of the committee members, we conducted our meetings via Zoom videoconferencing and maintained communication through email.

The Strategic Planning Committee recently concluded a key initiative focused on developing a comprehensive 5-Year Strategic Plan and introducing it to the DEC for initial review. The primary objectives of this effort were to create a forward-thinking strategic roadmap that aligns with the organization’s mission and vision, to formally



present the plan to the DEC for feedback, and to produce a promotional video that effectively communicates the plan’s strengths and future direction.

Over the course of several working sessions, the committee engaged in strategic discussions to assess the current organizational landscape, identify future priorities, and outline major initiatives across key focus areas including growth, innovation, sustainability and community impact. These sessions culminated in the drafting of a detailed and actionable five-year plan.

Once completed, the plan was presented to the DEC in a formal session. The response from the DEC was largely positive, and several thoughtful suggestions were provided for incorporation into the final version.

In addition to the written plan, a promotional video was created to visually and narratively convey the value and vision of the strategic plan. This video is intended for internal and external use and will serve as a central communication piece to build awareness and support among Legion members. Key lessons learned during this process include the importance of early engagement with leadership to ensure strategic alignment, the value of collaborative input in developing a meaningful and realistic plan, and the effectiveness of multimedia tools in enhancing communication and Legion member engagement.

Roxanne Zoet
Chairman

Training
Committee

Overview

The 2024-25 membership year was a pivotal one for the Department of Minnesota Training Committee. We remain focused on our mission of equipping Legionnaires at all levels with the tools, knowledge and confidence needed to lead and serve effectively. As in previous years, our efforts centered on expanding access to training, improving how we deliver content, and cultivating a strong leadership pipeline through structured, relevant training topics.

Accomplishments

A major highlight of the year was the successful Department Legion College held in April, where 18 students engaged in thoughtful discussions, shared ideas, and expressed hopes for the future of the organization. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, particularly for sessions on leadership development and post revitalization. The curriculum was updated to reflect national “Be the One” and membership initiatives, as well as the servant leadership model. Our next class is already scheduled for April 23-26, 2026.

In addition, we hosted a series of breakout sessions at the Department Fall Conference. These sessions focused on leadership succession planning, membership growth strategies, officer responsibilities, and mental health awareness. A new breakout format was piloted to encourage greater engagement and provide more time for Q&A, which was well received.

Challenges

Despite these successes, challenges persist. Resistance to training from some local leadership continues to be a barrier to broader participation. Geographic distance and unpredictable winter weather limited our ability to conduct in-person sessions across the state. Additionally, we identified an ongoing need for a sustainable digital training platform that includes both live and recorded content to ensure accessibility for all members.

Looking Ahead

The Training Committee remains committed to fostering a culture of leadership, mentorship, and continuous learning throughout the Department of Minnesota. With strong collaboration and continued support, we are confident that 2025-26 will be a breakthrough year for Legion education. We are currently seeking additional committee members to help carry this mission forward — if you are passionate about training and want to help shape the future of our organization, we’d love to have you on board.

Additionally, we have begun reaching out to Department Legion College alumni and will be inviting them to participate in future training efforts. Alumni, please keep an eye out for communications on how you can support the committee — your experience and insight are invaluable as we continue to build and grow our training program.

Jennifer Havlick
Chairman

Veterans
Affairs &
Rehabilitation

On behalf of the 2024-2025 Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to serve. At the beginning of this term, our primary goal was to clearly define our vision, aligning it with the spirit and legacy of previous years.

Our mission remains steadfast:

To ensure every veteran receives the care they deserve with dignity, respect, and the full support of our healthcare systems and providers. We are committed to advocating for effective rehabilitation services and promoting lifelong well-being for all veterans. Our vision is a future where no veteran is left behind, where their sacrifices are honored not only in word but through action, and where their voices are heard through our unwavering dedication.

Committee Overview

This year began a bit slower than expected, with the election of the chair happening later than usual. I was honored to be elected as chair, and our five-member committee includes:

- Gary Lee Davenport (7th District)
- Jan Ekert (7th District)
- Marissa LaCourt (3rd District)
- Lynn Lyons (5th District)
- Me (2nd District)

We are also supported by our staff:

- Department Service Officer Janet Lorenzo
- Assistant Department Service Officer Jason Storm

who serve as advisors. Their daily interactions with veterans bring vital insights and pressing concerns directly to the committee.

Our Objectives

One of our main goals this year was to visit all VA Medical Centers, State Veterans Homes and even CBOCs (Community-Based Outpatient Clinics) to build stronger relationships with facility leadership. These visits aimed to identify potential areas of collaboration, particularly regarding gaps in care or challenges veterans face within these systems.

However, coordinating visits across busy schedules — both within leadership and our committee — proved to be quite challenging. As a result, we began discussing how to better utilize the VA&R chairs from each of Minnesota’s 10 districts. By empowering these district-level leaders, we believe we can achieve a much broader and more meaningful impact.

Thank you to the districts that have already taken initiative by visiting facilities and providing much-needed items. This work is vital — and it reinforces that supporting our veterans should be a statewide effort, not just the responsibility of this committee. In the future, we hope to explore using a portion of the VA&R budget to help offset costs incurred by district efforts.

Communication
& Collaboration

We welcome and encourage feedback from the entire American Legion family. Your ideas and involvement are critical to our success. Our committee may only consist of five members, but by working together with Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and the SAL, we can create a more powerful and united force for change.

We’ve committed to holding committee meetings at 7 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month, primarily via Zoom. Additionally, we aim to meet in person at least once per quarter, preferably around department rallies or other major events, as we believe face-to-face discussions are essential for deeper, strategic conversations.

Looking Ahead

Going forward, we plan to work closely with our department service officer to track needs and requests across the state, including requests for Fund 85. By keeping an eye on where these funds are being used, we hope to identify larger trends and respond more effectively not only within facilities but statewide.

Additionally, we’ll explore opportunities to support legislative efforts, advocate for program improvements, and collaborate with county veterans service officers, who are often the first to recognize urgent needs in their communities.

It has been a privilege to serve this year. There is always more work to be done, and the more hands we have helping, the greater our impact can be — not just here in Minnesota, but nationwide. Let’s continue to come together in service of our veterans and ensure that they are never forgotten.

Pam Krill
Chairman