

Legionville weathers massive wind storm

Continued from Page 1

was a little freaked out, but not too much.”

After about 30 minutes, the winds abated somewhat although the rain was still coming down in sheets. Mueller and another counselor headed for the dorms to check on the campers.

“I ran to cabin one. All the cabins had their doors locked because they were banging in the wind. I kept knocking and they finally opened up. The girls in the cabin were a little wet from the rain, but they were okay.”

Mueller said trees had fallen on Cabins 5 and 7, but had done little damage. “One of the counselors said they had seen the canoes and kayaks flying into the trees. We went down the beach, and the dock was on its side. The canoes were everywhere.”

All the campers were brought back to the main building, which had emergency lighting run by a generator. “Some of the kids seemed scared, but once they calmed down, it wasn’t so scary anymore.”

The dormitory cabins at Legionville are built into the ground and made of concrete. They provide ample shelter from storms. As soon as the storm was over, the power circuits were disabled to make sure none of the downed lines were dangerous.

The staff immediately got on the phones, calling parents and asking them to come to the camp and pick up their children. “We had no phone service, so we used our cell phones until the batteries died,” Krueger said.

The campers were moved, group by group, to the large new educational building where they watched movies run by the generator that evening. The girls slept in the large auditorium/gymnasium area of the building, and the boys slept in the classroom section.

Parents began arriving early, but it was to no avail because there was no way to get to the camp.

Randy Tesdahl, Department Adjutant, arrived early Monday morning. “When I got to the point in Legionville Road where it bends off toward the camp, there were a group of cars parked. It was mostly parents trying to get to the camp.”

Tesdahl talked with the authorities, and they said he might be able to get his four-wheel drive vehicle down the mile stretch to the camp.

“I took two moms and a dad, and we headed down the ditch. I had to drive about 80 percent of the way in the ditch. All the neighbors were out with their chain saws and tractors and ATVs or whatever they had trying to clear the road and their properties.

“There were trees down everywhere – pines, oaks, poplars – and all the power lines were on the ground.”

Tesdahl said the Legionville Camp was much the same as the road in, with trees downed everywhere. There were trees downed on two of the dorms, and another tree had punched a hole in the education building roof.

Legionville is run by The American Legion in partnership with the Minnesota State Patrol, and two state troopers were on the site helping keep the scene safe and secure.

“Roy had set up a command table that morning, and was returning the kid’s money they had brought for the canteen. The counselors were keeping the kids busy playing kick-ball.”

The kids ate what they could from the canteen, and water and Gatorade were dispensed to the campers.

“The food truck was supposed to come in at 6 that morning, but it wouldn’t have made any difference because we had no power to cook the food,” Krueger said. “I told the parents as they came in to feed their kids as soon as possible.”

Tesdahl made several more runs that morning, and other parents braved the ditches to get to the camp. By about 10 a.m., a single lane of the road was open.

At about 11 a.m., Tesdahl went to the Cub Foods in Brainerd to get some provisions for the remaining campers. “I went in and told them what I was doing and that I needed 100 sandwiches. They dropped everything and started making those sandwiches. They told other customers they’d have to wait.”

Tesdahl also visited local businesses trying to buy chain saw bar oil, gas and oil and gas cans to keep the chain saws going at the camp. Several volunteers had showed up including Legionville President Wayne Gilbertson and Vice President Gene Leifeld.

“The kids were just great,” Tesdahl said. “They were so excited. One of them told me they were going to get t-shirts that said, ‘I survived the Legionville storm of 2015.’”

As the day wore on, the number of campers became smaller and smaller until they had all departed the camp.

Meanwhile, at the Legion headquarters in St. Paul, Laura Weber, the program director of Legionville, continued to work the phones to talk to parents. As the week went on, many of the campers re-registered for another week. One additional session was added, and if 30 campers sign up, it will be held.

Gilbertson said a local electrical contractor, Holden Electric Co. of Baxter, did an extraordinary job at the camp. “They went out of their way for us. They helped get the trees off the roofs. By late afternoon on Monday, they had



Downed power lines lay on the ground near Cabin 5. The power was immediately cut after the storm so the wires were not live.



The camp's tractor was used to haul away the huge trees that were downed in the storm.



Campers waited in the main building's porch for their parents to pick them up.

power re-established.”

Some poles had to be replaced, and another spliced. The lines were all still in working order which helped greatly.

Gilbertson said the insurance will cover much of the loss after a \$2,500 deductible. Some of the loss will never be recouped. “We would have lost \$37,500 just in camper fees if returns were requested. If we can get half those campers back for a later session, that would help a lot.

In end, all but 30 campers signed up for another session. “And the canoes were older and valued at \$250 each. We won’t be able to replace them for that.”

And now the camp’s tractor, possibly because of the heavy work it was forced to do, has died. The tree that fell on the main building caused about \$7,500 in damage. And Gilbertson said the dock will have to be replaced.

“With the donations we’ve received, though, maybe we can get a bigger, better tractor that the camp really needs. We’ll be looking at putting all the electrical lines underground.”

Gilbertson paid special tribute to Krueger. “He’s worked 10-12 hours every day since the storm. He’s worked non-stop and he deserves a lot of credit.”

Krueger said he is looking forward to more volunteers coming to the camp. “The trails are blocked by hundreds of trees. We have two deer hunts planned for this fall, but it won’t happen unless those trails are cleared.”

There were some estimations that the camp might be closed for several weeks, or that it might be closed for the summer, but the camp got back into full swing for the next weekend.

Samantha Mueller is back teaching campers how to paddle canoes safely. “We’ve still got nine of the 14 canoes, so we can make do. The rest of the camp looks really good.”



A stabilizing line from a utility pole sheared another pole right down the middle during the storm.

Donations

Continued from Page 1

powerful storm that did considerable damage to the camp.

A long line of Legionnaires took their turns presenting checks to Department Commander Peggy Moon. The Seventh and 10th Districts donated a thousand dollars each as did Wheaton Post 80 and Zimmerman Post 560.

St. Louis Park Post 282 chipped in \$3,500 only to be topped by Buffalo Post 270 with a check to Legionville for \$10,000.

The Minnesota American Legion Foundation donated \$10,000 and the Department of Minnesota contributed \$15,000. A bucket that was passed on the convention floor netted over \$1,700.

Both the Law Officer of the Year Mark Ficcadenti of St. Paul and Firefighter of the Year Barry Schuldt of Clear Lake returned their expense money for appearing at the convention – and earmarked it for Legionville.

More is expected from other posts and individuals.

The response has been so strong that a plan approved at the convention to enlist social media fundraising techniques was put on hold. Those who wish to donate online, though, can still do so by going to www.legionville.org and clicking on the “donate” button.

Money above and beyond the storm damage cost will be used for other improvements at the camp. The camp, run in conjunction with the Minnesota State Patrol, provides education in school safety patrol, bus safety, Americanism, canoeing, swimming and other fun activities for about 800 elementary schoolers each year.

“I was overwhelmed at the generosity of our Legionnaires from all over the state,” Commander Peggy Moon said. “They eagerly stepped up to the plate to not only donate the needed funds, but to also volunteer their time to clean up the grounds after the storm.”

“The dedicated members of the Department of Minnesota, care deeply about Legionville, and they certainly displayed that sentiment at the convention.”

PARADE



Steve and Diane Sullivan were part of the American Legion Rider contingent that paraded through Redwood Falls.



Past National Vice Commander Don Hayden was the emcee for the parade, with President Chris Ronning looking on.



Incoming Commander Jim Kellogg drove Gator through town with his grandson Jarek Slavin.



Ray Eiden carried a flag for the Fifth District.

MEMORIAL SERVICE



Chaplain Don Amundson lights the candles of remembrance during the 2015 Memorial Service



Past National Sons of the American Legion Commander Doug Bible was the featured speaker.



Legionnaires and Auxiliary members join hands singing God Bless America.



Commander Peggy Moon placed a rose during the opening processional.



Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, the installing officer, conducts the oath of office to the incoming Department and district officers.

2015 ANNUAL CONVENTION



Richard Neville, former Minnesotan and National Vice Commander, was a featured speaker at the 2015 convention.



The Ninth District Band entertained before the Saturday session.



Marlyn Engh, the official stenographer for the Minnesota American Legion, was honored at the convention for his many years of service.



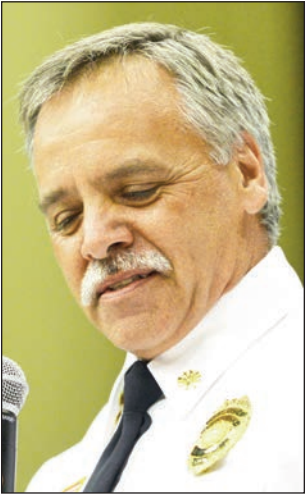
Exemplifying Minnesota Nice, these Legionnaires lined the wall at the Redwood Falls convention.



Chris Ronning, Auxiliary President, put on her special glasses for a visit to the Legion convention.



The Minnesota American Legion Riders took part in the annual parade through the tree-lined streets of Redwood Falls.



Firefighter of the Year Barry Schudt of Clear Lake.



Eagle Scout of the Year Cody O'Halloran was from Olivia.



The First District held an informal caucus on the floor of the convention between sessions.



Boys State representative Sam Swanson, sponsored by North End Post 474.



Peace Officer of the Year Mark Ficcamenti of St. Paul.



Membership Director Pat Logan got a bat of his own from the Third District during the convention.



Caroline Donaldson of Eden Prairie was the Oratorical champion.



Minneapolis VA Director Patrick Kelly brought news from the VA.



Outgoing NECman Ray DeZurik fought back tears as he gave his final report to the convention.



Past National Commander Dan Ludwig introduced Richard Neville at the convention.

LEGION INSTALLATION



Commander Jim Kellogg received his commander's pin from his wife, Brenda.



Kellogg made his first speech as the leader of the Minnesota American Legion.



Jim Lucas was introduced as the new Membership Director.



Outgoing Commander Moon received gifts from her daughter, Angie, and her husband, Sixth District Commander Carl Moon.



Moon was presented with her colors by Past Department Commander Mike Ash.

AUXILIARY INSTALLATION



Past National Commander Kris Nelson and Past Department President Karen Thygeson presented the gavel to incoming President Sandy Fredrickson.



Fredrickson's grandchildren Lauren, Drew and Braylon recited the Pledge of Allegiance during the installation ceremony.



Fredrickson spoke of her coming year.



Chris Ronning pinned Sandy Fredrickson as part of the installation.

Awards and presentations made at the 2015 convention



COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS -- Bob Locker, chairman of the Community Service Committee, presented awards to posts that won awards for 2015.



3M MOST DOLLARS SPENT -- Community Service Chairman Bob Locker presents Carl Renalls of 3M Post 599 with a plaque honoring the post for the most dollars spent on community service for a post its size.



EMPLOYER AWARD -- Employment Chair Dave Heidebrink presented the annual Minnesota American Legion Employer of the Year Award to McNeilus Steel Co. of Dodge Center. From left are Heidebrink, Commander Peggy Moon, First District Commander Myron Ehrich, and Dodge Center Post members Dale Wellik and George Gunderson.



ARCADE PHALEN DOLLARS SPENT -- Arcade Phalen Post 577 won the Community Service Award for posts its size for most community dollars spent. From left are Commander Peggy Moon, Chairman Bob Locker and Lane Stunkel, post commander.



BOWLING TROPHY -- Lanesboro Post 40 won the Legion Bowling tourney. From left: Secretary John Torma, Commander Moon, First District Commander Myron Ehrich, Chairman Bob Mace.



WOMEN'S BOWLING -- The Auxiliary bowling team from Cold Spring Unit 455 was honored for first place in the Legion Bowling Tourney. From left: Pam Hoshal, John Torma, Bob Mace, Cindy Goepferd, Norma Tramm, Chris Ronning.



PRINCETON MOST DOLLARS SPENT -- Princeton Post 216 won the Community Service Award for posts its size for most community dollars spent. From left are Commander Peggy Moon, Chairman Bob Locker and Tess Davis representing the post.



LEGIONVILLE DONATION -- Auxiliary President Chris Ronning presented a check from her president's project to Department Commander Peggy Moon for Legionville, Moon's commander's project.



FIRE FIGHTER OF YEAR -- Law and Order Chair Tom Conway presented the Fire Fighter of the Year Award to Capt. Barry Schuldt of Clear Lake. In the center is Commander Peggy Moon.



WAITE PARK MOST DOLLARS SPENT -- Waite Park Post 428 won the Community Service Award for posts its size for most community dollars spent. From left are Commander Peggy Moon, Chairman Bob Locker and David Hector representing the post.



OUTSTANDING LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER -- Sgt. Mark Ficcadenti of the St. Paul Police Department was presented with the Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award. From left are Law and Order Chair Tom Conway, Commander Peggy Moon, Ficcadenti, and Fourth District Commander Dan Williams.



CLEARWATER MOST HOURS DONATED -- Clearwater Post 323 won the Community Service Award for posts its size for most community hours volunteered. From left are Commander Peggy Moon, Chairman Bob Locker and Tom Allen representing the post.



3M MOST HOURS DONATED -- 3M Post 599 won the Community Service Award for posts its size for most community hours donated. From left are Commander Peggy Moon, Chairman Bob Locker and Carl Renalls representing the post.



WOODBURY MOST HOURS DONATED -- Woodbury Post 501 won the Community Service Award for posts its size for most community hours donated. From left are Commander Peggy Moon, Chairman Bob Locker and Gary Richardson representing the post.

More honors and awards from the 2015 Department Convention



TROPHIES AND AWARDS -- From left: Commander Peggy Moon; Co-Chair Larry Ryan; Ray Turnquist, Anoka Post 102, accepting the Father L.J. Fortin Trophy, the Lindell Community Service Award, the Frank J. Ring Boy Scout Trophy, and the Levi M. Hall School Patrol Trophy; Steve Johnson, accepting the Joseph W. Finley Trophy and the Lloyd Grossnickle Award for Olivia Post 186; Carl Renalls, accepting the Americanism Trophy for 3M Post 599; and Mike Schaffer, Chair of the committee. Elysian Post 311 won the Stafford Kind Conservation Trophy and Lowry Post 253 won the Hanson Education Trophy.



BLOOD DONOR AWARD -- Denise Milton, Blood Chairman and Peggy Moon, Department Commander, presented Marvin Hill an award for being the top donor in the state.



POST SERVICE OFFICER AWARDS -- Post Service Officer Awards were presented by Rehabilitation Chairman Wilson Spence. From left: Ed Mlynar, Third District; Leslie Hinrichs, First District; Ferdie Haberman, Second District, Accepting for Ned Jones; Marvin Hill, Eighth District; Heidi Schmidt, Fourth District; Ray Turnquist, 10th District, accepting for Frank Menter; Ray DeZurik, National Executive Committeeman.



SAL DONATIONS -- SAL Detachment Commander Dennis Henkemeyer presented Department Commander Peggy Moon with a batch of checks for different projects that were donated at the recent Sons of the American Legion convention.



WAITE PARK MOST HOURS DONATED -- Waite Park Post 428 won the Community Service Award for posts its size for most community hours donated. From left are Commander Peggy Moon, Chairman Bob Locker and David Hector representing the post.



RONNING GIFT TO SAL -- Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander Dennis Henkemeyer accepted a gift from Auxiliary President Chris Ronning during the Auxiliary Convention.



OPERATION POST HOME -- Glenn Mueller, Operation Post Home chair, presented certificates to Winona Post 9, Arcade-Phalen Post 577, and Brainerd Post 255. Accepting were Myron Ehrich, Lane Stunkel and Gerald Strobel.



RONNING GIFT -- Department Commander Peggy Moon accepted a gift from Auxiliary President Chris Ronning when she visited the Auxiliary Convention at Jackpot Junction.



PAST COMMANDER'S HAT -- Past Department Commander Al Davis presented outgoing Commander Peggy Moon with a past commander's sun visor at the convention.



PAT CLIFF AWARD -- The Pat Cliff Award, given to the top post service officer in the state, was given to Frank Menter, Anoka Post 102. Accepting for Menter was Ray Turnquist.



PREMIER AWARD -- Sixth District Commander Carl Moon received a plaque for being top finisher in the membership Premier Race. Presenting were Department Commander Peggy Moon and Membership Director Pat Logan.



CPR RUNNER UP -- Americanism Chair Art Tobkin presented Fourth District Commander Dan Williams with wild rice for having the second best percentage of completed Consolidated Post Reports.



CPR BEST JOB -- Americanism Chairman Art Tobkin presented Fifth District Commander Wayne Glanton with wild rice for having the highest percentage of Consolidate Post Reports turned in.