



A mural painted by a veteran lines a hallway at the St. Paul Vet Center in New Brighton. The center is on track to move back to St. Paul this spring.

Veteran groups push for expanding Vet Centers

Also, Commanders' Task Force forms its legislative priorities

By Tim Engstrom

Tom Mullon recalls working at the Veterans Affairs hospital in Manhattan early in his career and coordinating a meeting of 100 or so Vietnam veterans with hospital leaders.

One by one, the veterans told stories reflecting "the need for the VA to have counseling proper."

The answer they got from the director, no kidding, was: "Shut up. You are all a bunch of crybabies."

Mullon sits on The American Legion's National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and is a retired director of the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis. He told his story Dec. 16 to employees of members of Congress representing Minnesota as part of an effort

by The American Legion — and other veterans groups — to push the VA to expand Vet Centers in Minnesota.

As time passed during Mullon's career, the VA and society in general realized war adversely affects veterans in ways not seen on the outside, and they need care for it in ways other than physical care.

Under President Jimmy Carter, the VA got the Vet Center programs going to provide help without all the paperwork and waiting of the standard VA system. Then in the 1980s, the Reagan administration wanted to get rid of them, Mullon said.

"I thought, 'Why? They are doing what they should be doing,'" he told the congressional staff members last month.

The Diagnostic and Statistical
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No exit wound



IRAQ
WAR

Jeremy Wolfsteller leads The American Legion Department of Minnesota's efforts on care and rehabilitation of veterans, and he offices on the fourth level of the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis. He is a veteran of the Iraq War and has found his passion is helping veterans get the health care they deserve.

Despite surgery and recovery, the hardest part is two soldiers who saved his life in a Tal Afar battle never made it back home

This is the first in a two-part series. The first part profiles Jeremy Wolfsteller's combat experience in the Iraq War, and the second part details what he does for The American Legion as the service officer for the Department of Minnesota.

By Tim Engstrom

The Minnesota veterans community know Jeremy Wolfsteller as the departmental service officer for The American Legion of Minnesota.

Yes, his office is right there inside the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis. He leads efforts to assist veterans with getting care locally and is a key adviser on national issues regarding rehabilitation.

People who know him typically are aware the man was shot in Iraq. Some even know that he survived a nine-hour

surgery and years-long recovery.

But few know the full and difficult journey Wolfsteller, 41, has been through. Here is his story:

Wolfsteller grew up in the greater metropolitan area and graduated from Osseo Senior High School in 1997. He was big into skateboarding and frequented 3rd Lair, an indoor/outdoor skateboard park and shop in downtown Minneapolis (now in Golden Valley).

It can be hard to believe today seeing Wolfsteller walk with a slight limp that this guy could catch six or seven feet of air off 12-foot ramps. He skateboarded semiprofessionally, even with some big names like Tony Hawk. He also had played hockey from first grade to his senior year.

Looking for more direction in life, he enlisted in February 2001 with one year in the Delayed Entry Program.

Then the Twin Towers fell in New York on Sept. 11.

"My family became concerned that I'd be going to war," Wolfsteller said.

He entered the Army in February 2002 and went to basic and AIT at Fort Knox. Drill sergeants had adjusted training to prepare recruits for war.

His military occupational specialty was 19D — cavalry scout. Wolfsteller, in June 2003, became part of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Carson, Colorado.

Cavalry in combat traditionally meant horse-mounted troops. The 3rd had horses at the outbreak of World War II and turned in their trusty steeds in February 1942.

In modern warfare, cavalry units still fulfill many of the strategic purposes of soldiers on horseback but without the horses: scouting, reconnaissance, forward

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Tesdahl retires as department adjutant

By Tim Engstrom

On Friday, Dec. 20, Adjutant Randy Tesdahl put on his cowboy hat and coat, shook everyone's hand and walked down the hall at Department of Minnesota offices in the Veterans Service Building in St. Paul. He went down the elevator, out the front door and climbed in his pickup.

The former Marine had been with The American Legion staff since 2004. He had been adjutant since October 2009. Before that, he was the service officer.

Now, Tesdahl, 60, has to face his next and greatest battle: Parkinson's disease.

Parkinsonian issues come out because of stress, so he is retiring early to get much-needed time off at home with his wife, Peggy, in



Randy Tesdahl at the Department.

Elk River. He called it a medical discharge. "I plan to do as much hunting and fishing, and other hobbies, as I can," he said.

People will find him doing his therapies,
Continued on Page 2

Bud Redepenning, past dept. commander, dies

The American Legion Department of Minnesota Past Commander Bud Redepenning succumbed to a long battle with prostate cancer Dec. 13, after being on hospice care for 13 months.

He was 92. He is survived by his wife of 69 years, Betty Redepenning, son Darrel, of Fridley, daughters Deb, of Brooklyn Park, and Joline, of Ramsey, and four



Bud Redepenning

grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

The funeral takes place at about when this publication reaches readers: 11 a.m. Friday, Jan. 3, at Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Anoka. There was a visitation one hour before the service. A celebration of life was to be at 2 p.m. at Anoka Post 102, including
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too: long-distance walking, shadowboxing, weight training. As the disease progresses, the body stiffens.

“The more you move, the longer you are going to be able to move in your life,” Tesdahl said.

Tesdahl’s father was a line worker at Hormel (in Austin, the George Hormel family name is pronounced with the accent on the first syllable, not the second like in the commercials) for 42 years, killing hogs. His mother stayed at home, though she had been a nurse before the children were born. Tesdahl had an older brother — 20 years older — so that meant Little Randy was raised pretty much like an only child.

“Growing up, I always envisioned myself working at the plant,” he said. “I could just do my job and come home, like my dad.”

His mother struggled with diabetes and died in her 50s, when the boy was 14. His dad remarried and suddenly Tesdahl had nine step-siblings.

Randy wrestled for the Austin Packers, but he was never all that good. His best year, his senior year, he was .500. He figured entering the military was a way to prove himself.

“I am not a fat, chubby, little kid at the end of the block who was always picked last,” Tesdahl said.

That’s why he chose the U.S. Marine Corps, to prove himself to be above average. And he got promoted for talking some buddies to enter the Corps, too.

He graduated Austin High School in 1977 and went to basic at Paris Island. He did MOS school as a supply clerk at Camp Lejeune, then he was stationed at Lejeune, too, with what was then called the 2nd of the 175th Self-Propelled Gun Battery, an artillery unit.

Did he drink the Camp Lejeune water, later found to be contaminated? Yes. (An estimated 1 million Marines did.)

After three years, Tesdahl re-enlisted and went to Okinawa, Japan. For the first time, he worked in an office. He had been accustomed to the field. He ran into those two buddies he enlisted back in Austin, and the group ended up making many memories together over there.

In 1980, he was sent to Camp Pendleton to serve with the 1st Force Service Support Group, these days called 1st Marine Logistics Group. He was prepositioning ships headed to Diego Garcia, a British atoll in the Indian Ocean.

He had an opportunity for promotion to sergeant and reenlist with a dream assignment, so he requested independent duty in the Midwest. The Marines sent him to Indianapolis, and he worked in a federal building a short walk from The American Legion headquarters.

Meanwhile, a supply clerk in Minneapolis was busted for embezzlement, and that resulted in Tesdahl coming to Minnesota. It was 1981. In 1984, he was a staff sergeant and had another option to choose a location. He chose Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point because of the excellent fishing. He and his buddies enjoyed all the Cape Hatteras fishing spots.

When he arrived, no clerks were needed, so the local powers had him trained as a military game warden, working for a biologist who reported to the base commander. Tesdahl loved every minute of that role. The wardens rebuilt ponds, controlled water levels, ran tournaments, managed herds, studied white-tailed deer, monitored permits and worked closely with foresters. He got to drive a big John Deere bulldozer, and they surveyed and managed areas where aircraft crashed. At the time, Harrier Jump Jets were being tested.

Eighteen months into the tour, Marine headquarters found out Tesdahl wasn’t doing the job for which he had been given a reenlistment bonus, so Cherry Point created a job for him — supply chief of MCAS Cherry Point Simulated Systems. Pilots could fly the region in a simulator so they knew the land like the back of their hand.

That only lasted about seven months before he was sent to recruiting school in San Diego in October 1986. Since he had been a clerk in Minneapolis, and the same major was still there, he came to Minnesota once again. Tesdahl was a canvassing recruiter out of Crystal, and got many of his recruits in the Anoka area. Then he became NCOIC (non-commissioned officer in charge) of the Bloomington office.

By now, he had two sons, Eric and Corey, and he had become a single parent, living on 10 acres in St. Francis. He had a choice of remaining in recruiting or leaving the Marines. He opted to stay in, and he went back for career training. He returned as the NCOIC of MEPS, short for Military Entrance Processing Station, at the Minneapolis Federal Building on Third Avenue. (Today, MEPS is at the Whipple Building at Fort Snelling.)

Recruiting left him with very few weekends and long hours, but working at MEPS did allow him time with the boys.

In 1990, he went on a blind date to a line-dancing place. Line dancing was popular at the time. The date seemed interested in dancing with everyone but him, but she had brought along a friend, Peggy.

“We talked all night,” Randy said. “And a year later, we got married.”

A city girl who grew up by Lake Harriet in Minneapolis suddenly was living in rural Minnesota and was the stepmother of two rambunctious boys. Together, Peggy and Randy had a daughter, Amelia, in 1996.

He became a gunnery sergeant in 1991. The Persian Gulf War broke out, and he was among a line of Minneapolis Marines at the commander’s door asking to go fight. The officer told them recruiters were needed in an all-volunteer force and nobody was going anywhere, unless they had nuclear-biological-chemical training.

The homefront of the Gulf War was known for its protests, and the Federal Building was one of two popular places for protesters to gather, the other being Lake Street. Tesdahl and his team saw much of the vitriol.

After the war, he was sent to recruiter stations around the metro, often to get things back in shape. In 1996, he came back to MEPS, and he retired from the Marine Corps in 1997.

Tesdahl worked for the U.S. Postal Service for a year at the Minnehaha station doing walking routes. After two dog incidents, the supervisors sent him to do a mounted route in Coon Rapids. He also was dealing with a neck problem from falls during his Marine days, so the work was not enjoyable.

A recruiting buddy, Mike O’Donnell, helped Tesdahl get an office job with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development finding jobs for veterans. Tesdahl worked out of Anoka, and O’Donnell out of Burnsville, and they competed, much like they had done in their recruiting efforts.

Sadly, O’Donnell died from a heart attack.

Tesdahl was a member of St. Francis Post 622, and used the post for his work’s classroom needs. He was involved in officer roles for the post and district while at DEED, and he was membership director when the 10th was leading districts in membership.

He was asked if he would be interested in the department service officer position, working at the VA Medical Center. He was interviewed but not selected. Months later, he was asked to re-interview, and he was not offended about being passed over, so, in April 2004, he got the job.

A lot was going on at the VA because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Adjutant Lyle Foltz allowed Tesdahl to hire some help. Tesdahl hired Tom Newman. Later Tesdahl arranged for Newman to meet President Obama in Cannon Falls, to tell him firsthand what was happening at the VA.

In October 2009, Foltz retired after 14 years, and Commander Al Davis asked Tesdahl to fill out the rest of the adjutant term. He sought the job full-time, and he kept the role since.

Tesdahl said he is proud he brought younger veterans into the organization, such as Jeremy Wolfsteller into the service officer role. Tesdahl said he showed the organization “you don’t have to be chained to a desk 24/7 to be productive and good, because there is a dedicated staff.”

He said he enjoyed helping veterans enjoy hunting and fishing. During his years, he oversaw changes in technology.

“When I started, it was Blackberry, and now it is



Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Herke recognizes Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl for his years of service to veterans and The American Legion. Many leaders acknowledged his efforts in his final months.



The American Legion Department of Minnesota Adjutant Randy Tesdahl, left, receives a folded and encased U.S. flag from Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans President Neal Loidolt on Dec. 12 during Home for the Holidays at Target Field in Minneapolis. The flag was flown over the headquarters of the 34th Infantry Division at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait on Memorial Day 2019. Loidolt recognized Tesdahl for his years of service in the Marine Corps and to the Minnesota veterans community.

iPhone,” he said.

And Tesdahl said he is proud of his work at the Capitol, getting done what was best for veterans.

“Sometimes you got to talk to them like a Marine. You got to use your Marine voice,” he said.

When the centennial convention of The American Legion was short \$74,000, Tesdahl walked downstairs, asked and came back with a check. That’s

taking action. Communications Director Al Zdon, at his retirement party in November, said Tesdahl had the gift of explaining what was needed in succinct terms.

Last January, Tesdahl realized something was “seriously wrong” with his health. Fairview found two spots during a scan of his neck. They were on his medulla oblongata and his brainstem. He suffered spikes of

anxiety and began tests.

He wasn’t happy about some aspects of state politics, at the same time, and has since connected his anger perhaps was more tied to the Parkinson’s than to anything else. He is now 100 percent service-connected with the VA, and he learned he could medically retire.

Dec. 20 was his final day in the office, taking vacation until his final official day of Dec. 31.

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Here the Rangers climbed the cliffs — Pointe du Hoc — Omaha Beach

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS



The Groveland Barbershop of St. Paul gave free haircuts in a luxury suite at Target Field during Home for the Holidays on Dec. 12. On the left, barber Joe Teachworth cuts the hair of Army veteran Kevin Ward of Minneapolis and, on the right, barber Nick Hoshor trims the hair of Army veteran Joshua Zieroth of Eden Prairie.



Army veteran Derek Dosedel of Mankato and his medical alert dog Nelson (from K9s for Warriors) speak with G4S human relations manager Tanya Moryn, center, and G4S recruiter Sevilla Arradondo. G4S is a security services company that seeks to hire veterans because of their military experience.



T.C. Bear hands out dessert plates to veterans at Home for the Holidays, sponsored by the Twins and WCCO. The event featured a holiday meal.



Legionnaires from Apple Valley Post 1776 provided honor guard duties Dec. 12 at MACV Home for the Holidays at Target Field.



Minnesota Air National Guard 1st Sgt. Devin Duryee checks out literature available The American Legion Department of Minnesota's table at Home for the Holidays on Dec. 12. Seated is Heather Larson, the department's veterans affairs and rehabilitation specialist. With Duryee are Senior Airman Andrew Nielsen, right, and Airman 1st Class Eron Puro.

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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4 FANTASTIC WAYS TO EXPERIENCE MNHHS

1 LEARN & PLAY AT FAMILY DAY

Learn about native star maps through art activities and fun for all during **Dakota & Ojibwe Winter Sky Family Day**, Jan 11, Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.



2 GO BEHIND THE HEADLINES

History Forum: American Populism's Rise, Fall & Legacy with Kevin Gaines, Jan 25, Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.

Photo by Dan Addison



3 TAKE A CIVIL WAR TOUR

3 TAKE A CIVIL WAR TOUR

Learn about the battle flags, art, memorials, and Minnesota's role in the Civil War during the **Capitol Civil War Tour**, Sat, Feb 15, Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul.



4 ATTEND WWII ROUND TABLE

Hear presentations on topics in World War II history. Upcoming: **Evolution of the Russian Army** (Jan 14) and **The Battle of Manila** (Feb 11). Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.



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December was jam-packed with news

Greetings, Minnesota American Legion Family.

The ceremony for the 100th convention plaque dedication was held in Minneapolis at Peavey Plaza on Nicollet Mall Saturday, Dec. 7. The first American Legion National Convention was held in Minneapolis in 1919 and the 100th convention was held in Minneapolis in August 2018.

The 100th plaque was placed next to the first (1919) plaque. A big thank you to all the participants and planners for organizing this event, especially Dick Ward and Jim Kellogg.

Also, thank you to the color guard from the General Colin Powell Academy for presenting the colors of our country. We had a great turnout for our annual American Legion Family Pearl Harbor get-together in December. Thank you to the Rosetown

Commander's Column

Mark Dvorak



Post for hosting and to Legion Rider Paul Hassing for being the emcee for this event.

I'm asking District commanders to review their membership plan and revise the plan as needed going into the new year. Get together with your leadership team and look at posts that may need district help to achieve their goals.

MyLegion.org training has begun! Currently the training is being offered for District officers. Dick Ward, Linda Dvorak and Marvin Ostrum are heading up the training sessions, more information to follow.

National and state membership is ahead of last year at this time. Please keep up the great

work! All donations to my project need to be made out to the following: Minnesota American Legion Foundation Fund 82. Donations can be given to me or sent to Jennifer Kelley at the following: The American Legion, 20 W. 12th St., Room 300A, St Paul, MN 55155-2000. I hope you all have a great January! For God and Country.

Mark Dvorak is the commander of The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

Mark Dvorak is the commander of The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

For many, the biggest battles are after they come home...



New Year's resolutions, past and present

Well, they say it's that time of the year again where we review the last year and decide on something personal to improve upon during the next.

Many people look at losing the weight they put on during the holidays; others may want to save more money for a future getaway, and others still may desire to do more in their communities.

In other words, we are looking at making a resolution, "a firm decision to do or not to do something." We look at making a New Year's resolution as we enter each new year.

Making a New Year's resolution originally was rooted in a religious context as one was to search their hearts for anything that they could do or be better at for God and not themselves. Your resolution was proclaimed to your family and friends so they could help monitor your progress. They said that about 66 percent of resolutions were not completely met each year.

There isn't a better New Year's resolution than what starts in the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:7-8.

He writes, "But whatever

Chaplain's Corner

Betty Jass



was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of God. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing God my Lord for whose sake I have lost all things."

He goes on to say in Philippians 3:8-9, "I consider them rubbish [the word he uses literally means manure] that I may gain God and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own, that comes from the law, but that which is through faith — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

Paul is not talking about any virtue found in himself. He is wanting to know God more and better. What is remarkable is that he has known God for 30 years, yet he is resolved to know Him better. Now comes his determined resolution in light of all this: "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

and so, to attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11).

By faith he is saying, "I want to know God and live my life by faith in His finished work."

Likewise, we can get to know God by spending time in His Word, going to Him in prayer, meditating upon Him, and asking Him for help. I resolve that I want to know the Lord by being in His Word every day — not just reading the words of Scripture, but meditating upon them, personalizing them, and making them part of my life. This resolution is something that shouldn't just last for the months of January and February but last the whole year-round.

Betty Jass is the chaplain for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

Preamble note:

At the meetings in fall 2019, the National Executive Committee passed a

change to the Preamble from "in the Great Wars" to "all wars."

This change comes in the wake of Congress

passing the LEGION Act, acknowledging the U.S. military has been involved in 12 additional wars not previously recognized.

Mail Call

Look who was right there under their noses

The following is something I found in the paper worth repeating:

I'm the guy who asked to join your organization. I'm the guy who paid his dues to join.

I'm the guy who stood up in front of you and promised to be faithful and loyal.

I'm the guy who came to your meetings and no one paid attention to.

I tried several times to be friends, but they all had their own buddies to talk to and sit next to.

I sat down several times, but no one paid any attention to me.

I hoped very much that someone would have asked me to take part in a fundraising project or something, but no one saw my efforts when I volunteered.

I missed a few meetings after joining because I was sick and couldn't be there.

No one asked me at the next meeting where I had been.

I guess it didn't matter very much to others whether I was there or not.

The next meeting, I decided to stay home and watch TV.

The following meeting, I attended, but no one asked me where I was for the last meeting.

You might say I'm a good guy or a "good family man" who holds a responsible job and loves his community and country.

You know who else I am? The guy who never came back.

It amuses me how the heads of organizations and the members discuss why the organization is losing members.

It amuses me to think that they spend so much time looking for new members when I was there all the time.

All they need to do was make me feel needed, wanted and welcome.

— Author Unknown

Linda Dvorak commander 3rd District Le Center

Paul Edwards commander 6th District Brainerd

Did you know a veteran is a veteran?

In the past few years, since I became involved in The American Legion and started paying attention to things going on above the Post level, I have observed a few things. Consequently, I have also formed a few opinions, some of which might be considered heretical.

At virtually every event I attend, whether it be a rally, a conference or a convention, there seems to be an ongoing litany of, "membership, membership, membership," and folks trying to come up with new and better ways to recruit and renew members.

Because I tend to be a realist, I don't have a real problem with all of that, as far as it goes. We need dues in the coffers to do the things that we do. I won't try to mention here all the programs and projects our dues support across the country. We also need people — people to greet members and guests at our posts, people to stand honor guard at funerals, people to go out and teach children about flag etiquette, even people to help with cleaning up after a fundraiser breakfast or dinner.

Bottom line, we do need membership. Recruiting is pretty straight forward. Talk to veterans about the Legion and ask them to join. Be able to explain why you are a member and why it should be important to them. Renewing is both simple and difficult at the same time. Simple to tell folks that it is time to pay their annual dues. Difficult to get them to actually write the check. Dues notices, emails, letters and phone calls. I get it. Nuff said.

Where I see a problem is retaining new members, and I see this as a problem to drop in the laps of the individual Posts. Ask yourself these questions, "Is my Post a good-old-boys club? Have we been doing things the same way for many years, and we like it that way? Do we go out of our way to make new members welcome?"

Here are some comments that have been made to new post members, either in my hearing or relayed to me by people I trust.

Said to a female veteran visiting a post meeting:

"The women meet down the hall."

Said to a Vietnam veteran when he joined a post: "Sit there in the back. We will tell you when you can talk."

Said of a stateside supply sergeant during Vietnam: "We don't want him in the Post; he's not a real veteran."

Said of a female veteran: "She shouldn't be a candidate for Legion office; she's not a real veteran."

This is very much old school and "good-old-boy" thinking, and it needs to be done away with. With the signing of the LEGION Act in July, a veteran is a veteran is a veteran. We all took the same Oath of Enlistment and saluted the same flag. All veterans deserve our respect and are entitled to every courtesy that we as Legionnaires can give them.

Today's young veterans are not the same as those from the '60s and '70s. In those days, typically the man was the veteran who went to work and brought home the bacon and Mama stayed home with the kids. Dad was a member of the Legion and went there for a beer after work. Occasionally, Mom could get away to go to an Auxiliary meeting.

The world has changed. Today's veteran is 40 percent likely to be a woman. Today's male veteran is more family-oriented, and we need to make changes in the posts to reflect that reality. For example, more family events like picnics or kids' parties. How about better advertising for Legion Baseball? How about scheduling conferences and conventions so that Mom and Dad don't have to take so much time off from work? Maybe arrange child care at those events?

I will close with this thought. We talk about the Legion being a family organization. We need to make changes at every level of the organization to make it more family friendly and welcoming to new members. If we don't make those changes, it doesn't matter if we go out and recruit 10,000 new members. They will vote with their feet.

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What's happening?

Memorial fund benefits 3 killed

ST. CLOUD — A memorial fund has been set up for the three National Guard soldiers from Company C of the 2-211th General Support Aviation Battalion in St. Cloud who died in the crash of a Black Hawk helicopter on Dec. 5.

They were Chief Warrant Officer 2 James A. Rogers Jr., Chief Warrant Officer 2 Charles P. Nord and Sgt. Kort M. Plantenberg.

Donations can go to "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Memorial Fund," Deerwood Bank, P.O. Box 337, Waite Park, MN 56387.

8 bands to play at music fundraiser

NEW PRAGUE — The third annual MusicFest fundraiser for the New Prague Area Veterans Memorial will be Saturday, Feb. 22, at the New Prague American Legion Park Ballroom. The first band will start at 1 p.m. and the last band starts around 9 p.m. There will be eight bands playing a variety of music.

Cost is \$10 presale and \$15 at the door. There will be door prizes and a silent auction. Food will be available starting at 1 p.m. Kids 12 and under are free.

Contact Linda Dvorak for more info

or to purchase tickets, 952-457-2129.

Legal Clinics slated around state

ST. PAUL — Free legal clinics for low-income veterans will be held in January, sponsored by the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans. The clinics offer information on housing, employment, benefits, debt collection, expungement and family law including child support. For more information call 651-200-4750. The clinics are:

- Tuesday, Jan. 7, from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m., at The Duluth Depot's Great Hall.
- Tuesday, Jan. 14, from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m., at VA Medical Center Flag Atrium Balcony Room Minneapolis.
- Tuesday, Jan. 28, from 10 a.m. to 3

p.m. at the St. Cloud VA, Auditorium, Building 8.

Ice fishing fun planned for Feb. 1

ST. PAUL — Arcade-Phalen Post 577 American Legion Riders will be sponsoring at Veterans and Families Ice Fishing Event at the Veterans Campground on Big Marine Lake on Saturday, Feb. 1. Bring your own fishing gear. There will be prizes for the three largest fish in both the adult and 16-and-under classes. Pre-registration fees of \$15 and \$20 can be paid at Eventbrite.com, search for veteran and families ice fishing event. There will be a silent auction from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. For more information call

John Weiss at 651-231-9053 or email at jweissmn@hotmail.com.

Testimonial set for April 18

NEW PRAGUE — The Testimonial Dinner honoring Department of Minnesota Commander Mark Dvorak will be on Saturday, April 18, at the American Legion Park Ballroom in New Prague.

Social is from 4 to 5:30 p.m., meal and program to follow. All are welcome to attend. Watch the Minnesota Legionnaire for additional information.

Linda Dvorak is the point of contact, 952-457-2129.

Continued on Page 7

Taps



Achmann, Ronald, 73, Air Force veteran of Vietnam, died Nov. 9, 2019. He was a member of Albany Post 482.

Athey, John C., 64, Navy and Army Reserve veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 20, 2019. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Athey, John C., 64, Navy and Army Reserve veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 20, 2019. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Baumgartner, Virgil, 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 26, 2019. He was a member of Worthington Post 5.

Boerboom, John, 73, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 16, 2019. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

Brockway, Gerald "Jerry", 84, Navy veteran during the Korean War, died Dec. 2, 2019. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

Burandt, Murlin A., 93, Army veteran, died Dec. 2, 2019. He developed his mechanical talent working in the motor pool. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

Burbach, John P., 86, Army veteran of Korean era, died Dec. 5, 2019. He served in Germany and France. He was a member of Winona Post 9.

Burggraff, Nicholas, 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 18, 2019. He was a paratrooper with the 11th Airborne in the Pacific. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

Buysse, Ronald Leo, 70, Marine veteran of Vietnam War, died Nov. 16, 2019. He was a member of Luverne Post 123.

Camery, Agnes K., 95, Navy WAVES veteran of World War II, died Dec. 16, 2019. She was a member of LeSueur Post 55.

Dalweg, Ronald H., 75, Army National Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 30, 2019. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

Drury, Daniel B., 69, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Nov. 17, 2019. He served combat duty in Da Nang keeping UH-1 helicopters in the air. He was a member of Milaca Post 178.

Dubbeldee, George, 95, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 11, 2019. He served in Okinawa and later on Gen. Douglas MacArthur's honor guard during the occupation of Japan and part of the security detail at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. He was a past commander and 73-year member of Tyler Post 185.

Eckstrom, Conrad, 91, veteran of World War II, died Nov. 12, 2019. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

Edwards, James Jerome, 74, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 1, 2019. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

Eisbrener, John Michael, 92, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 5, 2019. He served aboard the battleship New Jersey during the occupation of Japan. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Farrell, Robert "Bob" L., 81, Army and Army Reserves veteran, died Nov. 22, 2019. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

Focht, Robert, 85, Army veteran of the Korea War and Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Nov. 28, 2019. He was a member of Ashby Post 357.

Fletcher, Kevin Anthony, 78, Marine veteran of Vietnam, died Nov. 10, 2019. He was a member of Long Prairie Post 12.

Fussy, Alois, 90, Army veteran of Korea, died Dec. 5, 2019. He was a member of Bowls Post 642 for 34 years.

Gravley, Kenneth, 99, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 27, 2019. He served in Okinawa. He was a 73-year member of New London Post 537.

Gruenke, Anthony, 88, Army veteran of Korea, died Aug. 9, 2019. He was a member of Albany Post 482.

Gruenke, Virgil, 94, Navy veteran of World War II, died Aug. 7, 2019. He was a 73-year member of Albany Post 482.

Gunderson, Robert H., 98, Army veteran of World

Obituaries

The Minnesota Legionnaire reserves the right to edit all obituaries for style and brevity.

Please send to tengstrom@mnlegion.org or in the mail to the Department of Minnesota.

War II, died Nov. 23, 2019. He served in France and was awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for his role in a mission called "Baby Patrol," rescuing 81 children one night. He was a 73-year member of Dodge Center Post 384.

Haler, Ray L., 91, Army veteran of Korea era, died Dec. 1, 2019. He was a member of St. James Post 33.

Harvala, Glenn, 79, Navy veteran of the Vietnam era, died Nov. 20, 2019. He served 11 years (four of them sea duty) as an advanced welder. He was a past commander and a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Huneke, Burton, 88, Army veteran of Korea, died Dec. 13, 2019. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

Johnson, Delbert W., 85, Navy veteran of Korea, died Nov. 19, 2019. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

Johnson, Wayne Marlin, 78, Army veteran of the Cold War, died Dec. 13, 2019. He served at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and later in the National Guard. He was a member of St. Peter Post 37.

Kraemer, Ervin, 77, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died Oct. 28, 2019. He was a 45-year member of Albany Post 482.

Kuczaboski, Anthony, 72, Navy veteran who served at Subic Bay, Philippines, died Nov. 7, 2019. He was a member of Chaska Post 57.

Lassila, Leslie John, 94, Marine veteran of Pacific Theater of World War II, died Dec. 10, 2019. He earned two bronze stars as a Nagasaki atomic veteran. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Leinenweber, LeRoy, 80, National Guard veteran of Vietnam era, died Dec. 9, 2019. He was a member of St. James Post 33.

Lonneman, Francis "Franny", 83, Air National Guard veteran of the Vietnam era, died Nov. 23, 2019. He was a member of Adrian Post 32.

Lupkes, Oscar Melvin, 95, Army veteran of Korea, died Dec. 14, 2019. He was a member of Wheaton Post 80.

Mauritz, Jerry, 73, Army veteran of Vietnam, died March 21, 2019. He was a member of Albany Post 482.

Mayer, Myron M., 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 18, 2019. He was a 64-year member and a past commander of Willmar Post 167.

Murphy, Richard F., 89, Navy veteran of Korea, died Dec. 18, 2019. He served with the Seabees on the Island of Guam during the Korean War. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

Noeske, 96, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, serving in India, died Dec. 7, 2019. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

Noyd, Robert J., 72, Army veteran of the Vietnam War and the National Guard, died Nov. 30, 2019. He was a member of St. Peter Post 37.

Ohmann, Eugene, 88, Air Force veteran of Korea, died Oct. 1, 2019. He was a 47-year member of Albany Post 482.

Oliver, Donald, 76, Marine veteran of Vietnam, died Nov. 21, 2019. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

Ostendorf, Elmer, 77, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Nov. 4, 2019. He was a member of Albany Post 482.

Petersen, Kenneth I., 88, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 27, 2019. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Pomeranz, Delmer F., 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 12, 2019. He was a 72-year member of Millerville Post 527.

Popiel, Harry A., 77, Air Force veteran of Vietnam, died Nov. 4, 2019. He later served in the Air Force Reserves. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

Preuss, Richard Donald, 70, Air Force veteran of Vietnam, serving in Okinawa, died Nov. 13, 2019. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

Radtke, Scott, 56, Air Force veteran of Lebanon and

Grenada, died Nov. 1, 2019. He was a member of Albany Post 482.

Redepenning, Duane "Bud", 92, Army veteran of Korea, died Dec. 13, 2019. He was Department commander 1986-87, 10th District commander 1977-78, Department vice commander 1981-82 and Department membership director 1982-83. He was a past commander of Anoka Post 102.

Roberts, Kenneth Jr., 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 18, 2019. He was a member of Worthington Post 5.

Ronallo, Richard C., 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died Nov. 29, 2019. He served aboard the USS Alabama stationed at Okinawa. He was a member of Ashby Post 357.

Roos, Henry, 90, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 12, 2019. He was a member of New London Post 537.

Ruchti, Ronald, 76, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 17, 2019. He was a member of Willmar Post 167.

Rust, Aron, 90, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 3, 2019. He was a member of Worthington Post 5.

Sabrowsky, Milford, 84, Army veteran of Korea, died March 27, 2019. He was a 63-year member of Albany Post 482.

Schultz, Donavon Peter, 89, Army veteran of Korea, died Dec. 6, 2019. He was a member of Pine Island Post 184.

Smith, Donald Clair, 92, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 24, 2019. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Smith, Everett W., 86, Army veteran of Korea, died Nov. 26, 2019. He was a 50-year member of Howard Lake Post 145.

Smith, Francis "Jack" W., 98, Navy veteran of World War II, died Sept. 23, 2019. He served on the USS Bladen, an attack transport. He was a member of Apple Valley Post 1776 and a past commander of Keokuk, Iowa, Post 41.

Steenblock, Harold "Harry", 82, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 1, 2019. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Strom, Dennis, 92, Army veteran of World War II, died Nov. 25, 2019. He served in Japan, Germany, France and England. He was a member of Mora Post 201.

Swanson, Robert W., 75, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Nov. 25, 2019. He was a member of Hackensack Post 202.

Swenson, James Monroe, 70, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 3, 2019. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Talberg, Ray, 86, Army veteran. He was a member of Hillman Post 602 for 40 years.

Tesch, Kenneth, 85, Army veteran of Korea, died Nov. 19, 2019. He was a member of Long Prairie Post 12.

Thielman, Robert, 80, Army veteran of Korea, died May 2, 2019. He was a 52-year member of Albany Post 482.

Tippman, Gordon J., 96, Navy veteran of World War II, died Dec. 9, 2019. He was a member of Caledonia Post 191.

Tupy, Arnie L., 86, Army veteran of Korea, died Nov. 17, 2019. He was a past commander of New Prague Post 45.

Walsh, Donald George, 94, Army veteran of World War II and Korea, died Nov. 26, 2019.

Wittry, Robert Lea, 75, Army veteran of Vietnam era, died Nov. 26, 2019. He was a member of Lismore Post 636.

Zimmerman, Jack, 87, Air Force veteran of Korea, died Aug. 1, 2019. He was a 56-year member of Albany Post 482.

Zwach, Roger P., 75, Army National Guard veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 4, 2019. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

American Legion Auxiliary

Tarbill, Marge, 57, died Nov. 25, 2019. She was a member of Worthington Auxiliary Unit 5 and a former officer for the 2nd District.

Mpls. housing authority opts to make spouse and child of a veteran homeless

I attended an appeal at the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority Tuesday, Dec. 3, on behalf of the child of a combat veteran and his fiancé.

The first signs that the hearing was not going to go well were when the hearing officer instructed us to turn off our cell-phones and further instructed that the proceedings were to be conducted in secret and we had to promise not to discuss what happened at the hearing. So I won't discuss what transpired at this secret tribunal. What I will tell you is that I am outraged.

"Joe" is a decorated soldier that served two tours in Iraq. He was a cavalry scout, serving at the front lines. His awards for this service to his country include the Army Commendation Medal, which Joe earned by consistent meritorious service.

Upon discharge, Joe struggled with reintegration to civilian life. He made a mistake — a serious mistake that landed him in the criminal justice system as a defendant. He also owned this mistake, which is why he is now incarcerated at the Duluth Federal Prison Camp, the lowest level of prisons, for a much shorter sentence than could have been imposed had

Joe not owned his mistake. When Joe enlisted, he volunteered to serve this great country up to and including the ultimate sacrifice, his life. He served well and that is why we are proud to call him one of our own — veteran. For making a mistake, beyond the punishment of incarceration, his punishment now includes punishment of his fiancé and child — they became homeless because a unit of government — the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority — chose to put his son and fiancé on the street.

Not because MPHA had to, but because MPHA wanted to. The message the veteran community is hearing is loud and clear: There are now 78 communities in over 30 states that have ended veteran homelessness. Minneapolis and St. Paul are not on that list. The recent action by MPHA is but one reason why.

At the end of the hearing, I went to the regularly scheduled Minnesota Commanders' Task

Force and informed the body of MPHA's decision to make a family of a veteran homeless. The decision of the CTF is to send a letter signed by all nine of the congressionally chartered veteran service organizations objecting strongly to MPHA's decision to make a child and fiancé of a combat veteran homeless.

Action by the CTF to ensure this never happens again to a veteran's family is good and necessary; if you want to take action, please contact me.

Tommy Johnson is a member of the Earl C. Hill American Legion Post 550 in Bloomington; DAV Chapter 1 in Minneapolis, and serves as the VFW Department Legislative Office out of Geo. R. Wolff VFW Post 425 in Hopkins. His email address is TwoPuttTommy@gmail.com or via cell, 612-424-0482 (please leave a message).

Guest Column

Tommy Johnson



Farewell to the dedicated readers of The Minnesota Legionnaire

To the Readers:

I said goodbye at the Fall Conference, and I said goodbye to the Auxiliary, and I said goodbye at my farewell event. I'm just about goodbyed out.

But it occurred to me that I haven't said goodbye to the ones who paid my salary all these years: the readers of this great publication.

When I took over the newspaper 23 years ago, I had this strange feeling that nobody was reading it. So I did what I could do with my limited skills to make it a better newspaper. Much of what I did involved trying to find out what readers wanted.

One thing that seemed to work well was the series of feature stories about veterans. Over time, I've written about 225 of them and, as the years went by, the readership seemed to catch on.

Other ideas came right from the readers. Ray DeZurik at one time asked me, "How come you don't have a community calendar in the newspaper?"

I didn't have an answer. And now for many years we've had the What's Happening section, and I know people read it because if we get a phone number wrong, the calls just keep on coming.

And speaking of getting things wrong, I want to compliment you all for being so patient. When I was the editor at Hibbing, a friend who was another daily editor down the road used to sign off by saying, "I've got to go now and arrange tomorrow's mistakes." Journalism is called

"history in a hurry," and part of that is not always getting it right.

For instance, each year we run the photo of the commander and president in color, along with their biographies. One year I ran the picture of the new president with a caption and biography from last year's president. Oops.

It was suggested at that point that I needed a proof-reader, and Jennifer Kelley, a program director on our staff, was nominated for that position. Over time, she has caught literally thousands of mistakes. Thousands. I can't thank her enough.

I remember a cartoon one time where the publisher is talking to the editor, and the publisher says, "How come the correction to the mistake we had on page one is buried back on page 23?" "Because," said the editor, "when we make a mistake, it ain't news."

One of the real success stories in the Legionnaire has been, strangely enough, the obituaries. When I started, we'd run about four or five a month. Somewhere along the way, though, the readers took over and now we run 80-100 most months. Each one has to be sent in by the post or individual, and each has to adhere to a fairly strict policy. Again, it was a reader who wondered why we didn't alphabetize them. Now we do, and it's a great

improvement.

From the time I was in high school, all I wanted to be was a journalist. I am one of those rare people that God has blessed with a job they want to do for a whole career. I am grateful.

So now there's a new editor, and you know what? He's going to do things differently. He's a newspaperman of longstanding, though, and so if you see something you don't like, or if you've got a good idea, let him know. He's listening.

The American Legion is an incredibly important institution in American life, and I was proud to be a very small part of it for so long. I may be sailing off into the sunset, but I'm leaving behind 70,000 amazing volunteers in Minnesota. Don't ever stop doing what's best for veterans, for your community and for your nation. And, if the time has come to step aside, like me, give that new person all the support you can.

Take care, everybody. I'll see you down the road.

For God and Country.

Al Zdon retired as the editor of The Minnesota Legionnaire and communications director for the Department of Minnesota on Dec. 31.

Editor's Note

Al Zdon



Holidays are rough for military families

Greetings American Legion Family,

I hope everyone had a great time over the holidays. As of this writing, they haven't happened yet, but I know I will have a great time.

I know that because I get to spend the holidays with loved ones. Whether its family, friends or Legion family or all of those wrapped into one, I will have a good time. I am truly blessed to have the friends and family that I do, and it's time that I do a better job at showing it to them.

This is a great time of year (other than the snow and cold, and I can't ride my bike) for a lot of us, but we have to remember those who are not having such a great time. I can complain about the cold as I walk to

my car and drive to my heated house. There are many veterans and families who have to brave the cold with no place to go. I know many of you do a lot to help those in need. I think the Legion family can do more. We have a lot of deployed military whose family will be missing them. The holidays can be a very rough period for military families. We have a lot of Riders, and Legion family that are doing great things to try and make it a little less stressful. I think we can do more.

I want to thank everyone who helped out with and attended the Pearl Harbor Day Membership

Rally. I think we had a great turnout. Not everything went perfect, but it doesn't always have to. And to all of you with all of those wonderful ideas on how things should have been done, maybe next time express those great ideas beforehand.

Love to all of you.

Paul Hassing is the director of the American Legion Riders for the Department of Minnesota.

Legion Riders

Paul Hassing



Legion membership chart as of Dec. 18

District	2020 Goal	Total 2019	Total 2020	Weeks Gain	Total Posts	Goal Posts	% Of Goal
District 1	8,149	8,091	6,995	137	58	3	85.84%
District 2	6,497	6,413	5,505	86	84	5	84.73%
District 3	11,021	10,956	9,433	246	65	6	85.59%
District 4	2,136	2,118	1,803	35	18	3	84.41%
District 5	2,346	2,325	1,778	50	23	0	75.79%
District 6	10,891	10,820	9,168	153	71	11	84.18%
District 7	5,778	5,702	4,947	102	76	7	85.62%
District 8	3,788	3,748	3,101	77	40	3	81.86%
District 9	6,124	6,059	5,168	138	65	7	84.39%
District 10	9,108	9,054	7,664	235	54	6	84.15%
District 11	3,655	1,897	1,630	116	2	0	44.60%
Totals	69,493	67,183	57,192	1,375	556	51	82.30%

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Same Date
Last Year

The SAL Update:

News from the Sons of The American Legion



Steve Sullivan and Robert Foss



Steve Sullivan and Shawn Davis

Detachment commander

Dave Vulcan

I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year.

As we start the new calendar year, we look back on a busy December. We had a good turnout at the Pearl Harbor Day Membership Rally in Rosetown on Dec. 7. We had a very good membership turn-in.

Thank you all for the great job. I would like to thank the Rosetown Legion Family for hosting the rally and the Legion Riders for organizing it this year.

I would like to thank the Fridley Post for inviting me to its Christmas Banquet on Dec. 21. An enjoyable time was had by all.

As we move forward into the New Year, I would like to remind all Districts if you would like me to attend your Mid-Winter meetings, please let me know the date, time and location of the meeting. Also don't forget to make your reservation for the spring convention in East Grand Forks on March 13 and 14.

I have two projects, one being the ceiling in the dining hall at Legionville and the other being the SAL Disabled Veterans Deer Hunt. Thank you for those that have donated and any future donations will be appreciated.

Dave Vulcan is the commander of the Detachment of Minnesota for the Sons of The American Legion.

Photos by Detachment Historian Lou Michaels

State leaders gather. From left are Legion Riders Director Paul Hassing, Legion Department Commander Mark Dvorak, Auxiliary President Mary Hendrickson, Honorary Junior President Emily Sues and Sons of the American Legion Commander Dave Vulcan.



Continued from Page 1

security, flank moves, busting enemy lines. The terms “shock troops” and “cavalry” have been interchangeable. Cavalry can move with tanks, armored personnel carriers, Humvees or other trucks and even helicopters. You see mechanized cav, armored cav and air cav. To be flexible, they often operate without additional support from other units.

Wolfsteller said the commander of the 3rd asked top brass that his regiment enter the Iraq War.

“Unfortunately, he got what he requested.”

They left in March 2003 for Kuwait.

In this war, there was no scouting around the backwoods picking out terrain features and mapping them. The soldiers of the 3rd Cav went house to house, “clearing cities,” as they called it. They had Bradleys, and the scouts worked closely with the tankers.

Wolfsteller described hours in the desert heat with limited amounts of water. A private first class at the time, he drove Bradley Fighting Vehicles to Baghdad, Faluja, Ramadi, among other cities. After the defeat of the Iraqi conventional forces in late 2002, the well-known Iraqi Republican Guard no longer wore uniforms. It became difficult to tell a civilian from an enemy.

He was promoted to specialist in Iraq and returned unharmed — well, physically — from his first tour in March 2004.

“It was life-changing,” Wolfsteller said. “I wasn’t the same. I was very standoffish. It took months to figure out you’re not in a combat zone.”

He suffered symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder: always on high alert, drank heavily and was “all over the place” for about six months. He was preparing to get out of the Army in February 2005 — but then a stop-loss order came down. The 3rd ACR would return to Iraq in one year.

Back in the Sandbox by March ‘05, he was promoted to sergeant and became a senior scout. He ended up the gunner of the lead Bradley within his Scout Platoon — operating the M242 Bushmaster, a 25 mm chain-fed autocannon firing up to 200 rounds a minute, and an M240C, a coaxial weapon firing 7.62 mm rounds. Sgt. Wolf had a passion for it. “You have to be really good at multitasking while scanning your sector with the turret gun,”



Then a sergeant with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Jeremy Wolfsteller pauses for a photograph at the back of a Bradley Fighting Vehicle during his first tour of Iraq.

he said.

The Army’s logistics were rather lacking during the first tour. Wolfsteller said soldiers had to get by with low or no supplies. The second had better amounts of water, food and toiletries along with improved living quarters.

The 3rd first went to the Triangle of Death, a name given to a region south of Baghdad with major sectarian violence. A change in orders sent them to Baghdad for a month.

His squadron then was sent to take over Tal Afar in northwestern Iraq 35 miles west of Mosul, joining the local Kurdish fighters. They learned the city’s troublesome situation by working with a Stryker brigade slated to pull out.

“They did recon by gunfire,” he said.

The regional commander, then-Col. H.R. McMaster, wanted U.S. troops to win hearts and minds, rebuild the city and build an Iraqi version of the National Guard. Iraqis often acted like guardsmen but would be insurgents.

“It was really hard to figure out who was true,” Wolfsteller said.

By June 2005, they had done many missions into the city, with many soldiers injured by roadside bombs, rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire.

On June 25, the cavalry scouts were sent to a hilltop citadel in Tal Afar, where they coordinated operations with the Iraqi military and guard and U.S. Army Special Forces before heading out. This time, Sgt. Wolf was told he would be a dismount that day — going without the Bradley. He was assigned hand grenades, one on each side.

They walked to the Sarai district. With its narrow streets,

the ancient neighborhood was known for heavy insurgent activity. (Sidenote: Sarai again was the site of fighting in August 2017 during the Iraqi Civil War pitting ISIS against Iraqi forces.)

Wolf and others suspected not all the allies were allied. When they arrived in Sarai, gunfire was instantaneous.

“When we did that dismount, the insurgents were waiting for us. They knew we were coming that day.”

At that point, it was “scattered chaos,” Wolfsteller said. Soldiers took cover where they could: some behind a courtyard wall, some were caught in an alley. Enemy fire was coming from all sectors including rooftops.

His platoon sergeant was on the opposite side of an intersection, shooting down an alley and yelled for a specialist to lay cover using a grenade launcher. Wolfsteller found a huge truck tire in the dirt and lay in the prone position, firing toward a nearby rooftop to provide cover. He didn’t have much for cover behind him.

Pop. “When I got shot, I didn’t know what happened,” he said. “The impact was so great, I just thought ‘bomb.’”

He quickly realized it wasn’t. Wolfsteller wore a lot of protective gear. He looked at his body and didn’t see blood or a missing body part.

“I yelled for help. That’s the first thing you do in that situation, is yell for help,” he said. “I knew something wasn’t right. I couldn’t feel my legs anymore, and it was really hard to breathe.”

His platoon sergeant heard him and called for two soldiers

to come over. Spc. Hoby Bradford and PFC Eric Woods, a combat medic, pulled him out of that area.

The gun battle lasted two and a half hours, and the 28-year-old was injured in the first 10 minutes. Woods and Bradford administered first aid and IVs as their battlefield patient wandered in and out of consciousness.

The insurgent who shot Sgt. Wolf was believed to be in a courtyard, and soldiers were able to lob a grenade in his area. It is unknown whether the injured insurgent was the one who shot Sgt. Wolf.

Wolfsteller said the insurgents must have been trained to fire at soft spots in the armor of Americans, just underneath the interceptor vest where the femoral artery is. The 7.62 mm round hit him above his 9 mm pistol and below the hand grenade on his right side, striking right on the hip bone.

Woods and Bradford ran

with Wolf on a stretcher about 50 yards downhill to a set of Bradleys.

“They were returning fire as they were running with me,” he said.

Wolfsteller recalls the tail dropping on the Bradley and Spc. Ruperto Estrada saying, “You’re naked, Sgt. Wolf.”

The Bradley team medevac’d Wolf to outside the city where a Black Hawk helicopter landed. Wolfsteller recalls the sound of the propeller and the door opening. About 25 minutes had passed.

“At that point, I was like, ‘Oh, I made it this far,’ he said. ‘I’ll be in surgery soon.’”

The chopper took off, and, feeling safe, Wolfsteller let go and blacked out. He woke up, gasping for air, to the surprise of the medics. They landed within 30 mins at a combat support hospital in Baghdad. Doctors came rushing to the Black Hawk, brought him in, got him on life support and performed a nine-hour, life-saving surgery. Around 10 a.m. Iraq time and 1 a.m. in Minnesota, the rear-detachment casualty assistance office contacted Wolf’s family to let them know their son had been critically injured. Everyone gathered at his mom’s house in St. Louis Park.

They got another call nine hours later. Their son was in stable condition.

The bullet had traveled through his hip to his tailbone — shattering it — and went up L5 to L1 vertebrae before veering off a little left to hit the lowest left rib, then narrowly missing his heart as it punctured his left lung, finally settling in his scapula.

“It just never exited,”

Wolfsteller said. “Initially it was difficult for everyone to understand the severity of the wound.”

The Army reported back to his unit that he had survived and flew his family to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, Wolfsteller flew to the Army’s Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany while in a drug-induced coma. (The American Legion created Operation Comfort Warrior originally for Landstuhl, later expanding the program.)

A day later, he was flown to Walter Reed, where he was kept intubated and in a coma for two weeks in intensive care.

“I didn’t even know I was back in the U.S.,” he said.

In that first week, his parents had to make one of their biggest decisions of their lives. The surgeons explained they could install screws in his hip, tailbone and spine or they could lay him flat in a custom airbed for three months without moving. His parents chose the latter. There was a 50/50 chance he would walk again.

When he was conscious by the third week, he would fight his doctors and nurses, thinking they were trying to kill him. He’d pull out his IVs and yell, then intubated all over again several times.

“I was still in survival mode,” Wolfsteller said.

Nurses log-rolled him four times a day to prevent bed sores. The back of his head went bald. Three other people from his platoon were at Walter Reed, too, and they would come in to talk to him, providing moral support.

He also learned the men who saved his life, Bradford and



Jeremy Wolfsteller sits in front of Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Continued from Page 5**Roundtables ready for January**

ST. PAUL — The World War II History Roundtable in January focuses on the evolution of the Russian Army. Bruce Menning, author of the upcoming book “Russian Army and the First World War” and the classic book “Bayonets Before Bullets,” will discuss the turmoil of World War I as it led to World War II, according to the schedule.

The discussion takes place at 7 p.m. Jan. 14 at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul.

The Vietnam War Roundtable will hear from veterans who have returned to Vietnam.

“Often these trips can bring a sense

of closure or open doors to new life experiences or opportunities,” says the website.

It will be at 7 p.m. Jan. 20 at Concordia University in Buetow Auditorium on Hamline Avenue south of Interstate 94.

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Roundtable hears from Darlene Kotelnicki, who will talk about Civil War medicine on Jan. 27. The meeting begins at 5:30 p.m. with a social hour, a buffet meal at 6 p.m., followed by the presentation at 7 p.m., at the Lowell Inn, 102 N. Second St., in Stillwater.

Town hall meeting open to veterans

ST. CLOUD — Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA Health Care System

are invited to participate in a town hall meeting at 2:30 p.m. Jan. 15 in the Auditorium (Bldg. 8), St. Cloud VA Medical Center, 4801 Veterans Drive, in St. Cloud.

The town hall meeting is a public forum focusing on improving VA health care services and programs.

“This is a great chance for area veterans to discuss what is going well and what can be improved,” said Dr. Brent Thelen, director for the St. Cloud VA HCS.

Beginning at 1:30 p.m., Stearns County Veteran Service Officer Cory Vaske and VA staff members will be available to discuss enrollment in VA health care and provide information on the full range of veterans benefit programs.

“I invite veterans who are not aware

or who have questions about benefits available to them to come out and learn about what they earned because of their military service,” Thelen said.

WWI finally getting proper memorial

WASHINGTON — On Dec. 12, key leaders gathered on the site of the new National World War I Memorial in the nation’s capital to mark the start of construction, after the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission received a building permit from the National Park Service.

Those leaders included commission chair Terry Hamby, U.S. Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt, National Park Service acting director David

Vela, commission special advisers Sen. John Warner and Adm. Mike Mullen, and American Legion representative to the commission Jack Monahan.

The first phase of construction will be a 360-day project to rebuild the former Pershing Park, and prepare the site for the eventual installation.

St. Cloud VA hosts Recovery Night

ST. CLOUD — Recovery Night is slated for Tuesday, Jan. 14, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Building 8 (Auditorium) at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center. The night features a resource fair as well as veterans sharing their stories of victory, healing and hope. For more information, call 320-255-6353.

Woods, were killed in a tragic incident two weeks later on July 9, 2005. Wolf has a tattoo with their initials, that date and a fallen soldier cross.

Bradfield was shot during a raid while walking up a stairwell of an old school that was being used by insurgents to teach IED training. PFC Woods was the driver that day of the medevac M113 armored personnel carrier, which carried Bradfield out of the city. On the way to a medevac helicopter, the 113 APC struck a powerful improvised explosive device, lifting the vehicle off the ground and flipping it over. Woods died in the explosion, but Bradfield remained alive with a gunshot wound in his neck. The M113 commander, a staff sergeant, suffered a leg wound.

The platoon, in addition to the ongoing fight, had to cater to the rescue of the two men. They got them out, but Bradfield died in transport. The staff sergeant survived, and his leg had to be amputated while at Walter Reed.

"It was hard to be told the two guys who saved your life died and that you are not able to see them and thank them," Wolfsteller said.

The staff thought he might die. While motionless on the custom airbed, he suffered bacterial infections, became sick and couldn't eat. He atrophied from 225 pounds to 150 over three months.

But the plan worked. The medical staff sat him up in bed slowly — as in 5 degrees a day.

He couldn't feel his legs and still wasn't sure if his spine and sacrum would hold. He had thoughts of being paralyzed. After a few weeks, he reached 90 degrees and began physical therapy, such as the staff bending his knees while he lay in bed.

"They finally got them to bend after a week of bending. That was so painful," Wolfsteller said.

He did the parallel bars and while his left leg worked, the right one just flopped around. After three more months, he took his first step.

"From that moment on, there was no turning back," he said.

In December 2005, Wolfsteller came back to Minnesota for a week. Gov. Tim Pawlenty and other high-profile politicians were there for the welcome-home party.

"All the news channels were coming to my mom's house in



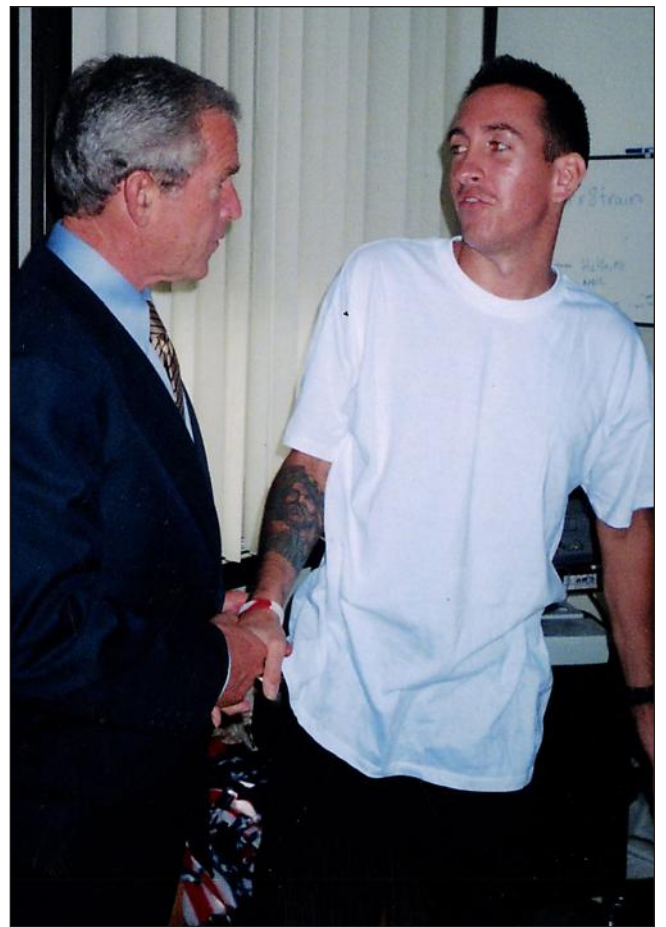
Jeremy Wolfsteller lies motionless on an air-cushion bed at Walter Reed.



These are people in Sgt. Wolf's platoon who were injured and came to visit him at Walter Reed. From left are Sgt. Scott, Lt. Oman (standing), Sgt. Wolfsteller, Spc. Nick Beintema and James Kiklis.



Jeremy Wolfsteller learns to walk again.



President George W. Bush shakes Jeremy Wolfsteller's hand during his recovery at Walter Reed Army Hospital.

St. Louis Park," Wolfsteller said. What's more, there was a welcome-home parade in Hopkins, with him riding in a Humvee and people lining the street. He called the experience "overwhelming."

After 10 months at Walter Reed, Wolfsteller asked to go to Evans Army Community Hospital at Fort Carson. In a wheelchair when he returned around April 2006, he became a casualty assistance officer, helping families when a service member has died.

"This responsibility hit home with me."

He has two coins from meeting George W. Bush twice. The first time Bush gave a coin to his dad when Wolfsteller was early in his treatment at Walter Reed and instructed the father to give it to the son when he recovered. The second time was four months later, when Wolfsteller could stand with help. Bush came in, closed the door, and seemed genuinely interested in how Wolfsteller was doing. He handed him the second coin.

When Sgt. Wolf finally reunited with his unit, he gave his platoon sergeant — Ed Malone, the one who had answered his

call for help — the second presidential coin.

Wolfsteller left the Army with a medical discharge in April 2007. He went to Normandale Community College, where he found a passion for helping veterans.

"I wanted to learn everything I could to help them with anything," he said.

After college, he worked at Normandale as a student counselor, then found out a department service officer job was open with The American Legion.

"I thought, 'This was it,'" he said.

That was 10 years ago. "The thing that keeps me going is the soldiers who didn't come back. Because I was given the opportunity by two soldiers who didn't make it back. I owe them my full effort and share this with my fellow veterans that might be struggling to find purpose."

Next month: Read what Jeremy Wolfsteller does at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Medical Center on behalf of The American Legion and how his work impacts the entire VA Health Care System.

Bud and Darrel were 1st father-son commanders in the department's history

Continued from Page 1

a Legion poppy ceremony.

Bud Redepenning was Department commander from July 1986 to June 1987. He was 10th District commander 1977-78, Department vice commander 1981-82 and Department membership director 1982-83.

He worked for 30 years for the Anoka County Highway Department, starting off as a surveyor and rising to be a director.

In 2004, the 10th District gave him an award as Godfather of the District.

"Dad through the years did many installations for a lot of commanders, including me," said Darrel Repepenning, commander in 2018-19.

Bud and Darrel were the first father-son Department of Minnesota

commanders.

"We're both really proud of that," Darrel said.

Darrel said Bud was known as a great speaker, often receiving standing ovations and leaving people with tender and funny moments. Bud established the brain sciences research at the University of Minnesota and appointed Dan Ludwig to be in charge, a move that catapulted Ludwig eventually to national commander.

Darrel said it was one example of how Bud impacted the organization.

"In the Legion, he touched a lot of people's lives."

Cards may be sent to 6391 Dellwood Drive NE, Fridley, MN 55432.

Images from Legionnaire files



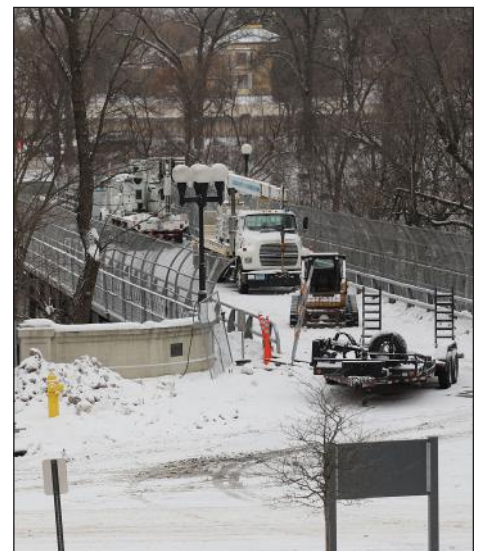
Bridge at Mpls. Vets Home to open

The grand opening for the truss bridge connecting the Minneapolis Veterans Home campus with Minnehaha Drive, Minnehaha Avenue and, ultimately, the Minneapolis VA Medical Center is slated for 2 p.m. Jan. 9.

The grand opening will feature a program and ribbon cutting. An open house and reception will follow at 3 p.m. inside Building 15 of the Minneapolis Veterans Home.

The 112-year-old bridge closed in August 2014 because of structural concerns, and the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and the Minnesota Department of Administration Construction Services have collaborated on repairs.

The bridge is key to accessing the Minneapolis Veterans Home because congestion occurs, particularly in the warm months, at the 46th Avenue entrance on the north side of the campus. This can make getting veterans to the VA Medical Center difficult during emergencies, and it makes reaching the veterans home harder for out-of-towners.



Equipment sits on the bridge Dec. 9. People attending the grand opening are asked to email sandy.larson@state.mn.us.

VIETNAM WAR

Wounded in a war zone, and surviving

4 veterans tell their stories of combat, and life after

By Al Zdon

ST. PAUL — Over 300,000 Americans were wounded while fighting in Vietnam.

At the December meeting of the Vietnam War Roundtable, three veterans and a nurse told of their experiences during the war including getting wounded, getting help and getting healed.

The Roundtable meets at 7 p.m. every third Monday of the month at Concordia University in St. Paul in the Buetow Auditorium.

Trudell Guerue, a Lakota Sioux, grew up on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. He said his cultural background propelled him to enlist in the Army in 1966.

He went through officer candidate school, airborne jump school and ended up in the 173rd Airborne in Vietnam as a forward artillery officer.

Guerue said while he was home on leave, he had an omen that told him he was going to die in Vietnam. "It scared the crap out of me. But once I knew I was going to die, I never was afraid again. I would call in artillery 10 meters from my position, and I knew there was no point in being afraid."

On one mission, his unit was sent to a village when they had an intelligence report that a district Viet Cong leader was going to hold a meeting.

"We came in the night before and rounded up all the men in the village, and guarded them so they wouldn't talk. Some 'white mice' were flown in. They were kind of the military police of Vietnam, and they wore white helmets."

Guerue said the Vietnamese police beat a woman, the leader's sister, until she indicated that the leader was hiding just below them in a tunnel.

The Americans entered the tunnel and found a huge store of ammunition and explosives.

"A grenade went off right next to me. I never heard it, but I could feel it. There was a bright orange light, and I knew I was dead. I hoped it wouldn't take too long, because I didn't want to feel the pain."

He was hit with shrapnel in several places, including one that hit his watch, stopping it at 4:35 p.m. "If it hadn't hit my watch, it would have taken my hand off."

He was taken to a chopper where he remembers the sand blown from the helicopter's rotors hitting his body. He was airlifted to a field station. "By this time, it really, really hurt."

"I spent the weekend in Vietnam. I was just miserable. I lived for the next morphine shot." He was then evacuated to Japan where he spent a week.

"I remember the doctor saying to me as they took me into surgery, 'You might not come back.' That did scare me."

Guerue was flown back to San Francisco where he underwent 16 surgeries in 13 months. "It was never, ever fun. And I'm the world's worst patient. My roommate was the last man hit at the

battle of Hamburger Hill."

Finally the doctors brought him in for a conference, and they read his entire medical report which ran to 20 or 30 pages. "And then they broke my heart. It was the worst thing that ever happened to me. They said, 'This officer is no longer fit for duty.' It still hurts."

Guerue accepted his post-service life, though, and made the best of it. He was accepted at Dartmouth, and then got his law degree from Notre Dame. His career included helping low-income people who ran afoul of the law.

mission, and they went in with two six-man teams and carried extra ammo and explosives. Their involvement went on for five days and the fighting sometimes was very close. "I know we were throwing each others' hand grenades back and forth."

Nagler was knocked down by a hand grenade. "It knocked me out. The next thing I remember they were putting plastic over my chest wounds and taping me up."

Bad weather prevented evacuation, though, and he had to tough it out. "It didn't hurt on the sixth day, but on the seventh day the pain came on. I didn't

figured I was a metal magnet, and I finished the war driving a division colonel around."

Nagler later had a 32-year career with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Keith Kimbrough served in both the 26th and 29th Marine Corps regiments in Vietnam. "I knew I was going to be drafted in 1966, and so I joined the branch of my choice."

He was a corporal and a squad leader serving near the DMZ. "We were in a rice paddy, and they were firing mortar rounds over our head. One was heading for me, and I had this vision of a hand moving it to the side. It went off, but not on top of me. I was hurt, but I wasn't killed."

The mortar round hit his right side, from his shoulder to his ankle and knocked him out.

He soon came to. "I looked at my right arm, and the blood was coming out like the water out of a pitcher. The corpsman was cutting off all my clothes. All I had on were my pants, boots and flak jacket."

He was helped aboard a tank that took him back to an aid station. "They patched me up and changed my bandages." Then it was on to the Philippines and then to Japan for surgery.

"I spent three months lying flat on my back, paralyzed." After four months, he was flown back to the United States. "They thought I'd have better healing in the U.S."

He had the highest praise for the Navy corpsmen. "They had a total disregard for their own lives. I remember one guy rescuing several Marines until he was shot in the backside himself."

Kimbrough spent 30 years in the military, both as a Marine and as an Army reservist.

Pam Burrows went into the Army nursing program during college because she could get paid as an E-3 and afford to live in an apartment. She later volunteered for service in Vietnam.

"They were going to send us to Fort Polk, and we heard that duty there was

awful. We said, we might as well go to Vietnam."

She did three months of training and was sent to the 71st Evacuation Hospital. "I didn't have a clue what was going on. We had no training about the culture or the country."

The nurses were assigned to 12-hour shifts six days a week. "We learned so much from the corpsmen. They were really outstanding. Some had been in the field."

What she remembers most was the healthy, young bodies of the servicemen that "were just broken up. It's a very sad image. As nurses, we just did what we needed to do and supported each other."

She said among the nurses and corpsmen, there was little regard for rank. "The only ones who showed their rank were the physicians. We all worked together. We didn't think of ourselves as officers. We were nurses."

Burrows said the patients were always courteous to them.

When the hospital came under attack, the staff would do what they could to protect them. "We'd take the mattresses off the empty beds and put them over them. The hospital had taken a direct hit before I got there, but not when I was there."

After Vietnam, she was sent to Fort Benning as a head nurse in post-op. She later had a long career in leadership and was the administrator for the Minnesota Veterans Home at Luverne, and later was the interim deputy commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Vietnam War Roundtable presents one program a month from September to May. It is co-sponsored by the Minnesota Military Museum, Twins Cities Public Television and Concordia University.

It was announced at the December meeting that the Disabled American Veterans of Minnesota was also joining as a sponsor.

Parking and admission to the roundtables is free. The January program will be about Vietnam veterans who have returned to Vietnam in later years, and their experiences.



From left are Pam Burrows, Keith Kimbrough, moderator Doug Bekke, Floyd Nagler and Trudell Guerue.



Floyd Nagler joined the Marine Corps in 1968 and was trained in reconnaissance. "I got into recon by mistake. I wanted to go into underwater demolition, but the Marines didn't have that. The next closest thing was recon."

He ended up, though, in an infantry unit in Vietnam that was heavily engaged in combat. "I spent three months watching people get killed all around me."

He finally got his orders to a recon unit, but he said his time with the infantry had ruined his training. "We were supposed to be swift, silent and deadly, with emphasis on the silent. But in the infantry we were trained the opposite way, to make noise and get into a fight."

On one of his first missions on a ridge line just inside Laos, his squad of six men were chased by North Vietnamese firing from tree forts. "I was firing away at them, and my guys came back and got me. They said we're not supposed to do that. We're supposed to get the hell out of there."

Nagler said his squad of six always included a Navy corpsman. "They were outstanding. Time and again, they would have total disregard for their safety, going out and grabbing somebody and bringing them back."

Marines do not have corpsman and have always worked with the Navy. "These guys would show up and they had no idea what they were getting into. Their eyes were as big as saucers. But we put them in the middle of us, and protected them. We taught them how to shoot their M-16s and pull the pin on a grenade."

Nagler told of the mission when he was first hit. It was a dangerous

want to take any morphine, though, because we only had so many men who could fire rifles."

The first attempt at bringing in a helicopter ended with the chopper being shot up and the co-pilot killed. The second one almost wrecked when it hit trees. Nagler and the rest hopped on a third helicopter.

"I remember looking at the ceiling of the helicopter and seeing a lot of light beams coming through. The bullets had been coming in the floor and going out the roof. I can't say enough about the helicopter pilots."

He was brought to a hospital and X-rays showed he had five pieces of shrapnel in his chest. He was taken out to the USS Sanctuary, a hospital ship anchored off the coast. Three pieces of metal were removed, but the other ones were too deep into lung tissue.

After some time, Nagler said he realized he was one of the least wounded on the ship. "I finagled some paperwork on the ship and got sent back to my recon squad."

Two months later, the squad was reconnoitering the Tiger Tooth, the highest mountain in Vietnam, and a bullet ricocheted off a rock and went through his backpack. "It hit me just to the right of the backbone. An inch over and I would have been paralyzed."

That was the end of his combat experience. "After that they



A well-known photograph by Dutch photographer Hubert van Es of the Associated Press of wounded soldiers at Hamburger Hill. Later working for UPI, van Es took the famous Fall of Saigon photo of civilians scrambling to board a CIA helicopter.

WORLD WAR II

'Those of us who weren't killed were captured'

The Battle of the Bulge left many soldiers in German hands

By Al Zdon

ST. PAUL — On Dec. 16, 1944, the German army stormed across the Siegfried Line, catching the American forces by complete surprise.

So began what became known as the Battle of the Bulge, six weeks of intense fighting that proved the mettle of the U.S. combat soldier.

The battle was described by author Gregory Fontenot, who has written "Loss and Redemption at St. Vith," and veteran Paul Thompson, who fought with the 106th Infantry Division and was captured on the second day of the battle.

Both spoke at the December program of the World War II History Roundtable, held at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul.

Fontenot traced the battle mainly through two divisions, the 7th Armored, the subject of the book, and Thompson's 106th.

"The battle was transcendent both in scope and in the scale of fighting," Fontenot said. "The Americans were surprised totally by the German counter-offensive. We didn't think it was a rational action."

The author described the situation prior to the battle, including the advancement in technology. "The Army went from semaphores to radios to fax machines in those years. We went from no radar to very good radar."

The battlefield mainly was in three large, primeval forests in Germany and Belgium: the Ardennes, the Hurtgen and the Eifel. "These were like Hansel and Gretel forests, very scary, especially if you're a tank and people can hit you from behind trees."

The American divisions guarding the front were spread over areas much too wide to be effective.

"And the German morale was surprisingly high. Every time we had them on the ropes, they hit us in the face."

Fontenot described the confusion of war, and how individual leadership becomes critical when everything else is breaking down. "If this has to happen, I'm going to be the one that has to do it." Initiative, adaptability and agility are critical when

everything else is a mess.

At the beginning of the battle, the 7th Armored Division was ordered to St. Vith, a road and railroad center at the heart of the German's push to the sea. For over a week, the 7th along with the 106th Infantry Division and other divisions bore the brunt of the German attack.

The 7th was eventually pushed back around Christmas time, but in mid-January recaptured St. Vith.

Fontenot told of one battle on Christmas Eve when the division lost 40 of 58 tanks in less than an hour.

On Christmas, the division tried to attack from Manhay, Belgium, but found that the road had been mined by the U.S. The division tried another road, and found it, too, was mined. "Not everything goes as planned, and we find out we are not as smart as we think we are."

By Jan. 23, the battle was over and the Germans had been pushed back to the original lines.

Paul Thompson grew up in Chicago and joined the U.S. Army in February of 1943. He was still 17 years old.

He was trained as a radar repairman and a rifleman, and in June of 1944 he joined the 106th Division in Indiana, and was assigned to a reconnaissance unit as a radio repairman. By October, the 106th was in Europe and by December, they were crossing France and then setting up on the front line in the Ardennes Forest.

Thompson's unit of 131 men was assigned to guard a village named Grosslangenfeld on the Siegfried Line between Germany and Belgium.

Thompson was part of the headquarters company and was assigned a bunker — that had been built by the Germans — that contained a .30 caliber machine gun.

"On the 16th of December, they hit us, and it was a total surprise. We drove the Germans back, and then they attacked later in the day, and we drove them off again."

When the first attack came at 5:30 in the morning, Thompson was sleeping on the second floor of a house in the

town. The attack was preceded by a major artillery bombardment.

"I was sure that the next shell was going to hit my bed, and so I grabbed my trousers and tried to put them on. I tried again, and then I just gave up and grabbed my rifle and headed for the bunker. I fought off the first German attack in my underwear. Later, I managed to go back to the house and get dressed.

"Looking back, I owe my life to General von Rundstedt (who planned the German attack). I was assigned to be in a forward foxhole on the perimeter at 6 a.m., but the general ordered the attack at 5:30. If I'd been in that foxhole, I'd have been the first casualty of the battle.

"When the Germans attacked, they didn't come up the hill like Pickett's Charge. They came up sneaking through the grass, trying to get close enough to throw a grenade at our bunker. We had to keep a sharp eye out."

Thompson praised his commanding officer who moved from position to position under heavy fire to encourage his men. At one point, he even brought them sandwiches. "He was a first-rate officer. He was killed."

The next day, the Germans came back with a much larger force, "And they just rolled right over us. We were told to break out, but we didn't. Those of us who weren't killed were captured."

For his part, Thompson headed off into the woods with a German soldier firing a burp gun in hot pursuit. "His gun would just fire a cloud of bullets, and you thought that eventually one of them was going to get you. I ran with the bullets whistling and snapping around me. It concentrates your mind pretty good."

The escape attempt proved futile, though, and Thompson was captured. "When I had a chance to sit down, I looked and my trousers were just shot through with holes, but not one of the bullets had touched me."

Thompson had nothing but good to say about the treatment he got when he was captured. "They were Volksgrenadiers. They were all old men, maybe 40 or 50 years old. They were citizen



Author and lecturer Greg Fontenot, left, describes the Battle of the Bulge alongside 106th Infantry Division veteran Paul Thompson.



An M4 Sherman tank with the 7th Armored Division at the Battle of the Bulge in 1945.

soldiers, just like us. They probably didn't want to be fighting in a war any more than we did."

Thompson spent the next four months in three German POW camps. At Stalag 12-A, he said he got restless, and he timed out the searchlight sweeps and was able to climb and get over a barbed-wire fence to visit a group of French prisoners in an adjoining part of the camp. "It was really a no-no, and if you got caught you got killed. But I was 19 years old and bored stiff. This was kind of an adrenaline rush."

The French had been there for a long time, working at a tank factory, and they got better food and treatment. Thompson made several forays into the French sector to get a good meal.

Other American prisoners caught wind of the promise of good food, and dug a trench under the barbed wire. The number of American visitors increased greatly, but one night the German guards cracked down.

"They sent police dogs in to search the French compound, looking for Americans. The Frenchmen hid two of us behind some removable panels.

"At 3 a.m., we decided we'd better get back to our compound and so we tried to sneak back." The Germans were ready for the escape, though, and began firing. Thompson somehow made it over the wire and back to the American side, but the other man was killed.

Thompson's final adventure in the

war came in April of 1945. The Germans had been bringing groups of 30 to 50 prisoners up to the front to fix railroad lines. "We were happy to get out from behind the barbed wire."

The horizon, he said, was just on fire with the American front moving closer and closer.

One night, the prisoner group was camped in the trees. "The guards were confused, and we didn't want to stick around to see what they were going to do.

"I know some of the guys tried to escape back into the woods, but we could hear firing from back there. So my buddy and I just walked out into the clearing in front of us and hung out. The American Army got closer and closer, and then we just joined them."

As they approached an American Jeep, there was still one more exciting moment. How would they be received? Thompson was wearing a German field jacket. "The men in the Jeep just looked at us, and then they burst out laughing. One of them said, 'You guys are the scariest looking soldiers I've ever seen.'"

Thompson was out of the Army by November of 1945, and after the war he settled in Minnesota.

Thompson's full story can be found on the Department website: mnlegion.org. Go to "Media and Publications" and click on Legionnaire. Download the June, 2017, issue.

Minneapolis VA gets \$5 million grant to study mix of PTSD, substance abuse

MINNEAPOLIS — A research team at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center has been approved for a \$5 million funding award by the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute to study the effectiveness of two psychotherapies for veterans with co-occurring posttraumatic stress disorder and substance use disorders.

The team is led by Dr. Shannon Kehle-Forbes, a research investigator at the Minneapolis VA and the Women's Health Sciences Division of VA's National Center for PTSD, and Dr. Hildi Hagedorn, a Minneapolis VA

research investigator.

Patients with co-occurring PTSD and substance use disorders prefer that their PTSD be treated alongside the substance use disorder, but little is known about how to best treat PTSD among those with impairing alcohol or drug use, according to a VA news release.

"This newly approved study will test two psychotherapy approaches for treating PTSD that have been shown to be effective for those without co-occurring substance use but have not been widely studied among those with both conditions: trauma-focused

therapy and non-trauma-focused therapy," the news release states.

It continues: "Trauma-focused therapy addresses thoughts or memories related to one's trauma, while non-trauma-focused therapy involves learning about how PTSD relates to one's current difficulties and problem solving of current life problems. The project will test which approach is better for reducing symptoms of PTSD and which is more likely to be completed by 420 patients at 14 VA Health Care Facilities nationwide. It will also test whether veterans with varying

substance use patterns and preferences for treatment respond differentially to the two approaches."

The project is titled Comparative Effectiveness of Trauma-Focused and Non-Trauma-Focused Treatment Strategies for PTSD among those with Co-occurring SUD — or COMPASS for short.

The news release says it will be the largest study to date examining psychotherapy treatment options for patients with both PTSD and substance use. The findings will guide patients and providers in making individualized treatment decisions

about how to best treat symptoms of PTSD for those with substance use.

"Although as many as 50 percent of patients with PTSD also have a substance use disorder, those struggling with both conditions have typically been excluded from studies evaluating treatments for PTSD. This has left these patients and their clinicians to make treatment decisions with limited information about whether our evidence-based therapies for PTSD will work as well for them. We are excited to be able to answer this important clinical question

to ensure that the care offered to veterans who are struggling with multiple treatment needs meets their preferences and gives them the best possible chance at improvement," said Kehle-Forbes, the project's principal investigator.

"This project was selected for PCORI funding not only for its scientific merit and commitment to engaging patients and other stakeholders, but also for its potential to fill an important gap in our health knowledge," said PCORI Interim Executive Director Josephine P. Briggs.

Membership looking strong down the stretch

ROSEVILLE — Department of Minnesota Commander Mark Dvorak delivered good news: Membership at the state and national levels is up compared to the same time last year.

“Wonderful things are getting done, so keep it up,” he said.

About 150 people turned out for the Pearl Harbor Membership Rally at Rose-town Post 542 on Dec. 7.

National is up 6,831, a turnaround of 67,545 from the same time last year, and the state is up 155, a turnaround of 3,779, Dvorak said.

He reiterated his theme for the year of getting younger veterans involved and allowing them to follow their passions.

Auxiliary President Mary Hendrickson welcomed people to visit Christmas light displays in Duluth, then talked membership. She noted it was ahead of the same time last year.

Detachment Commander Dave Vulcan of the Sons of The American Legion said 66 squadrons out of 238 are inactive. He said that’s 26 percent of the organization. Though membership, he said, is ahead of this time last year, the SAL needs help.

Honorary Junior President Emily Seuss said Juniors will push membership, too.

“We as Juniors also want to make sure we are here for another 100 years,” she said.

She said the Juniors plan to contact each of the five Minnesota veterans homes and ask them about their needs. The goal is to raise \$600 for each of the homes. That, she said, equals a grand total of \$3,000, and the Juniors have raised \$2,285. They need only \$715.

National Executive Committee Man Bill Barbknecht introduced several key leaders, noted the many commanders, vice commanders and past officers and added great talent will continue to bolster membership figures. He said past officers need to do more than give guidance; they need to help out.

“We need to get out and spread the word,” Barbknecht said. “The American Legion is not about bars and booze. It’s about the programs that we have.”

He told people at the rally not to go home and quit working on membership just because of positive trends.

Department of Minnesota Membership Director Sy Fix said Minnesota is in fourth place nationally among departments at 79.268 percent.

“We got a great, great team,” he said.



Jim Mueller of St. Paul Post 577, right, puts his arm around Jody Hassing, secretary of The American Legion Riders Department of Minnesota, after handing her a check for \$5,000 from the Chaska plant of Michael Foods to go toward the Riders’ 2020 fund drive. The company is headquartered in Minnetonka. On the left is Paul Hassing, who emceed the rally and is the director of the Legion Riders in Minnesota. He is married to Jody Hassing.



Department of Minnesota Membership Director Sy Fix confers Pearl Harbor Awards to Pat Logan and Myron Ehrich for having the highest percentage of membership turn-ins. Logan is the department vice commander for the 1st and 3rd districts, and Ehrich is the membership director for the 1st District.



From left are Chuck Stone, Glenn Mueller and Kassy, Tonia and Clint Bettermann. They are holding pheasant dinner checks of \$200 from North Branch Post 85, \$50 from St. Charles Post 190 and \$9,300 from Owatonna Post 77.



The General Colin L. Powell Leadership Academy Cadets present the colors Dec. 7 at the dedication of a plaque at Peavey Plaza in downtown Minneapolis on Dec. 7.



Department Vice Commander Teresa Ash and 5th District Commander Andrew Rose Sr. unveil a plaque commemorating the centennial national convention of The American Legion taking place in Minneapolis.



Dick Ward of Minneapolis Post 1 plays “Taps” on the bugle Dec. 7 to honor sailors and others killed in the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941 and soldiers killed Dec. 5 in a helicopter crash near St. Cloud.

Plaque at Peavey Plaza unveiled

MINNEAPOLIS — The American Legion and the city of Minneapolis have a relationship going back for 100 years. That connection is now explained on a plaque at Peavey Plaza, near the corner of Nicollet Avenue and South 11th Street.

On Pearl Harbor Day, about 25 members of The American Legion Family primarily from the 4th and 5th districts, gathered at Peavey Plaza to unveil and dedicate the plaque and to read a proclamation from Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey.

The ceremony had a moment of silence for military members who perished in the attacks at Pearl Harbor in 1941 and for three members of the Minnesota National Guard killed in a helicopter crash Dec. 5 about 15 miles southwest of St. Cloud.

Peavey Plaza is the site of the former Minneapolis Auditorium, which opened in 1905 and is where the first American Legion national convention took place in 1919. The structure was refurbished and became the Lyceum Theater in 1924, then razed in 1973. The site now has Minnesota Orchestra Hall and Peavey Plaza, both built in 1974.

The plaza got a makeover in 2018 and features a quarter-inch-deep wading pool. Of course, it isn’t operating in the

month of December. Snow, however, pooled at varying depths.

The new plaque is near a 1959 plaque that commemorates the first convention.

The new plaque (pictured in last month’s issue) says:

“100th National Convention of The American Legion, August 28, 29, 30, 1918. This tablet is placed in grateful recognition of The American Legion in awarding the 1st and the 100th national convention to the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota, dedicated November 11, 2019, Department of Minnesota.”

The dedication originally had been slated for Veterans Day, but it was switched to Pearl Harbor Day because of availability of an honor guard and other scheduling conflicts. Past Department Commander Jim Kellogg, Dick Ward of Minneapolis Post 1 and a few others worked with the city and Twin City Monument Co. to make the plaque happen.

Kellogg read the mayoral proclamation. It declares Veterans Day 2019 “The American Legion Day in the city of Minneapolis.”

Department Vice Commander Teresa Ash and 5th District Commander Andrew Rose Sr. unveiled the plaque.

Legion and VA note Physician of the Year

MINNEAPOLIS — American Legion officials in Minnesota recognized a general psychiatrist at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center as the Physician of the Year, not only for the Minnesota but for the entire VA Health Care System.

Megan Press will be recognized officially March 10 at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. The local program took place in the medical center’s auditorium on Dec. 19, with Director Jim Kelly present to thank the Legion.

American Legion Past National Commander Dan Ludwig said The American Legion was instrumental in forming the Veterans Bureau after World War I, and it later became what today is the Department of Veterans Affairs.

“We’ve been your partner since the beginning,” he said.

Ludwig spoke highly of



From left are Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller, Dr. Megan Press, Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, Rehabilitation Committee Chairman Wilson Spence III, then-Department Assistant Adjutant Mike Maxa and Rehabilitation Committee member Gary Munkholm.

the Minneapolis facility and added: “This is the flagship of the fleet, and this is a credit to all of you.”

It is the third year that The American Legion is given the Physician of the Year award.

“It has been an honor and a privilege working with veterans,” Press said.

She has worked at the VA Health Care System for 15 years. Press went to medical school at the University of

Arizona in Tucson and did her residency at the University of Minnesota. She was hired by the VA right after.

“I value the relationships created with veterans over time,” she said.



Mary Mehelich, clinical education liaison for the MDVA, shows a skills laboratory to a group of staff members.

Minneapolis Veterans Home to host nursing classes in auditorium space

MINNEAPOLIS — Imagine taking college classes at the site of your next employer.

That's pretty much what is happening at the Minneapolis Veterans Home. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has a new partnership with Inver Hills Community College that allows nursing students to take their classes at the home, where they have access to the facilities they will encounter in their field.

The partnership was set up "to really spark their interest in clinical care and hopefully they choose us as their place of work," said Mary Mehelich, clinical education liaison for the MDVA.

In the auditorium of Building 15, the MDVA has set up a classroom, a resident room and a skills laboratory. The stage is being used for annual training needed for all staff employees, new or not.

Inver Hills Community College offers a seven-week course for certified nursing assistants, commonly called CNAs. The

advantage of having the classes at the Minneapolis Veterans Home is the students can have the three-day clinical experience at the same location as their classes, plus during classes they can take advantage of facilities a short walk away.

Mehelich said she hopes it can become a model for other types of training besides CNAs. She mentioned professional development of the staff as one option, and she hopes veterans service organizations eventually will use the space.

The classroom is just that, a space with tables, chairs and a projector. The resident room is actually a mock room that replicates newer rooms in the MDVA's system of veterans homes.

"We'll be able to use it for simulation training," Mehelich said. "If they need to practice moving someone from the wheelchair to the toilet, that'll be a great space."

She said the skills laboratory is an area with dummies in beds, where the students learn

to make beds, move residents, give bed baths, place bedpans, roll residents over and perform range-of-motion exercises, among other tasks.

The annual training — called MAC for mandatory annual competency — is done during orientation for new staff members, then annually for all.

The auditorium in Building 15 was renovated nine years ago. The seating was removed to allow for more wheelchairs and flexibility of use. The classroom was set up this past fall, and the entertainment has been moved to the community rooms, said Sandy Larson, public affairs director for the Minneapolis Veterans Home.

Mehelich said the Minneapolis Veterans Home is not short-staffed, but, in a tight Twin Cities labor market, it doesn't want to end up short-staffed, either. Having CNA classes offered on the veterans home campus, rather than a college campus, helps ensure the facility remains strong.

Space for traveling military gets upgrade

MINNEAPOLIS — The Armed Forces Services Center at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport has moved into new digs.

Now, the place for members of the armed forces to hang out — or even bunk, if necessary — is inside the airport security. The soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, military retirees, former prisoners of war, Purple Heart recipients, Medal of Honor recipients, NATO officers and Department of Defense or U.S. Public Health Service personnel who stay there, often between connecting flights, won't need to exit security only to go through the checkpoint again when flying out.

An open house is slated for noon Jan. 9. The move happened Nov. 8.

AFSC Executive Director Debra Cain said usage appears to be up.

"It's been nonstop," she said.

Military personnel, she said, can feel like targets, especially when in uniform, and staying inside security works well for them.

She's eager to see the first month's numbers. The staff can tell by the increase in food consumption.

The Armed Forces Services Center, meanwhile, is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2020, and program will acknowledge that mark, too.

The place offers sleeping quarters, complimentary food, wireless internet, a TV-viewing lounge, restrooms and volunteer assistance, all at no charge.

The old location had 2,700 square feet, and



The men's sleeping area has 30 beds.

that figure includes the storage and staff offices. It had beds for 20 men and six women, with a baby crib in the women's quarters.

The new place has 5,900 square feet. It has 30 beds for men and 10 for women, with one crib in each of the men's and women's quarters. Some of the new beds are larger than the old ones.

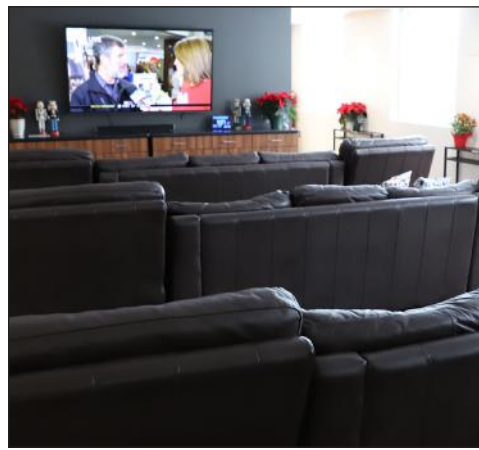
"We're finding that height of the average soldier is longer than it used to be," said Joe Jansen, The American Legion's AFSC representative.

The new location also offers a playroom, too. There is a screen in the TV lounge showing arrivals and departures.

The new location is in Terminal 1, like the old location, but it is now at the end of Concourse C, at the end of the tram ride, right across from the Blue Door Pub and up one floor.

That area of the airport, Jansen said, used to be for storage and training. The cost of the new area is \$2,005,000, paid by the Metropolitan Airports Commission, which will seek reimbursement for \$100,000 from the state Legislature. The AFSC treasury did bear the cost of the purchase of some of the new furniture. It is supported largely by veterans service organizations including The American Legion. The center does accept donations but not from troops staying there.

Jansen said the main reason for the move is MAC planned to demolish the old area for an ongoing remodeling of the ticketing and baggage claim areas at Terminal 1, to be wrapped up by 2022.



Traveling military can lounge in recliners in front of a TV while awaiting flights.

Veterans Day on the Hill is going to be the latest in session it ever has been

Continued from Page 1

Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition (DSM-III), published in 1980, and for the first time it recognized post-traumatic stress disorder as an effect of surviving war. There was movement to recognize that Vietnam veterans had more than merely "shellshock" and "combat fatigue."

Mullon, a former Vietnam War medic, and others fought to save the Vet Centers through temporary reprieve legislation, and they were successful.

Today, there are about 300 Veteran Centers in all 50 states, and they provide readjustment counseling to veterans and their families. The counseling covers a wide gamut, from bereavement to substance abuse assessments to dealing with sexual trauma, among other situations.

"Anyone can walk in and get care, including active duty. There aren't all these boxes to check and paperwork to clear," he said. "I've got all kinds of evidence that shows it works. It works."

Legion member from Sartell and Vietnam-era veteran Phil Ringstrom for years has lobbied for the expansion in Minnesota, particularly in western

Minnesota. Presently, there are three: Duluth, Brooklyn Park and New Brighton. The one in New Brighton, it should be noted, has plans to return in St. Paul. The state also has a fourth, termed a "Mobile Vet Center."

Ringstrom saw a steady stream of veterans struggling with PTSD during his career with the VA. He shared a Legion-compiled document showing how Minnesota is among states lacking an adequate presence of Vet Centers. It has one per 136,000 veterans. States such as Massachusetts, relatively close in veteran population to Minnesota, has one per 63,000 veterans. Maryland has one per 54,000. Colorado has one per 61,000 veterans. Wisconsin, adding two, is one per 89,000.

Virginia is the only state with a worse concentration than Minnesota, according to Ringstrom's numbers.

What's the difference? Why do some states get more than others? Mullon and Ringstrom said it all comes down to pressure on the VA. It has the funding within its budget to expand Vet Centers, but by Minnesota — from the elected officials in halls of Congress to the local veterans — putting pressure on the VA, that money can be spent here.

"The VA operates on the basis of being pushed," he said.

Ringstrom said Vet Centers are separate from the medical centers, in location and funding, and they are great for prevention. He has lobbied for one in Bemidji, St. Cloud and Mankato.

He also says they provide relief to overworked staff at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center.

The congressional staff members said they could take the matter back to their senators and representatives and ask to draft a letter to be signed.

Veterans Day on the Hill

Veterans Day on the Hill is slated for April 20. It is later than usual, but American Legion Adjutant Mike Maxa, Disabled American Veterans Adjutant Trent Dilks and other leaders in the veterans community have said the later date is good for the sake of advocacy.

"It's a final push to get it done," Maxa said.

"We can focus our advocacy on the bills that actually have a chance," Dilks said.

More details on the activities of the day are to come.

CTF legislative agenda

The Minnesota Commanders'

Task Force, comprising leaders of nine veterans organizations, included the expansion of Veteran Centers in its legislative initiatives for 2020. That indeed is a federal matter, rather than a state matter, but the inclusion calls for pushing state officials to ask the federal government, too.

The group gathered Dec. 19 to hash out which topics to lobby at the Capitol in St. Paul.

Other issues on the legislative docket for the Commanders' Task Force are:

- Expanding veterans courts. If a veteran facing criminal charges can show the incidents from his or her time in service, the judge can withhold the plea and instead assign help. If the veteran meets the judge's requirements, the judge can tear up the plea. The term "veterans courts" really is a diversion program.

Minnesota was a pioneer of veterans courts, back in 2008, and Chief Justice Lorie Gildea has spoken in favor of expansion. A measure passed the House last session but was held up in the Senate to make time for budget bills. With this being the off-year for the biennium, nothing should stand in the way of expansion as long as state leaders get pressure from

veterans statewide.

The CTF wants all veterans to mention it to their representatives and senators. Veterans courts has wide bipartisan support.

- Reducing the cost of hunting, fishing and trapping licenses for service-connected disabled veterans. This would be a matter of working hand in hand with the Department of Natural Resources before approaching the Legislature.

- Giving preference to homeless veterans in state-funded housing programs. The CTF wants the state to make strides in terms of fighting veteran homelessness, and it feels preference would force local agencies to get on board. It is widely accepted that many major cities in America have had far better success in diminishing homelessness among veterans than Minneapolis and St. Paul.

- Eliminating the eight-year cap for surviving spouses of a deceased veteran, thus making the Homestead Market Value Exclusion permanent. This would allow the surviving spouse to receive the exclusion until they remarry, sell, transfer or dispose of the property. Cities are coming around to the notion because they realize it can get homes, in many cases

large ones, back on the housing market.

The commanders felt this should pass as long as veterans make lawmakers aware of the need.

- Increase hourly wage for personal care attendants and allow for a state-recognized certificate of training. According to the state demographer, there are 612,000 Minnesotans with a serious disability. The elderly population, in 2018, stood at 865,000. It is projected to rise to 1,262,000 by 2030. There are 135,900 people employed in direct care in the state, the greatest portion being PCAs — at 60,450.

Their average hourly wage is \$11.34, which is \$2.18 above the poverty line and \$6 below the livable wage of \$16.34, according the statistics from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

- Increase the state grant given to veteran service organizations. Details on this push will be worked out later.

This is the second year of the two-year funding biennium. The CTF regularly calls for the state Legislature to fully fund the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

District commanders

1st District Dale Wellik



Happy New Year from the mighty 1st District American Legion Family. The last holiday of 2019 is over, and I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas with family and friends and remembered the deployed service members and their families and all of the less fortunate in the spirit of giving.

working. We are getting new members and some out of the 1982 and 1982 AD post. Thank you to all of you working the membership program.

Your benefits you have earned through your service to our country, get signed up for them and get your VA identification card.

Veterans, thank you for your service. Everyone thank you for all of the support you give to your fellow man.

Remember, our deployed and their families. Pray for them and peace over the world.

For God and Country.

We had a very busy year, and this year is starting out that way, also. Mid-Winter rally, Four Chaplains, Sweetheart Rally and revitalization at local Posts. During the National Commander's Tour, take the time to go visit with him when he comes right here near you.

Membership is vital to our American Legion organization. The membership drives are

3rd District Linda Dvorak



Happy New Year from the Thundering Third!

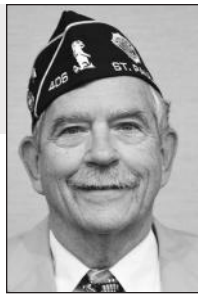
Is everyone ready for the MyLegion.Org Training? We have had two sessions, one in Richfield and one in Montgomery. These first few training sessions are geared towards the District officers. What's next? Post-level training! Keep your eyes open for updates on this very important and valuable program. You do not want to miss an opportunity to learn everything MyLegion.org can do.

has been meeting to get the first Minnesota Legion College (Minnesota Legion College for the 21st Century) executed.

It looks like the first class will be in May at Camp Ripley. The course will last approximately two days, Friday evening through Sunday noon. Watch for more information and application procedures in the near future. We are limiting this first class to 20 people.

As long as we are talking training, the Minnesota Legion College ad hoc committee

4th District Joe Jansen



Hello to all our 4th District Legion Family members. I hope you are able to enjoy the holidays with family & friends.

The 4th and 5th districts have been active in our communities. The memorial dedication of the "Partners for 100 Years" plaque was celebrated Dec. 7 at the Peavey Plaza in Minneapolis.

Then representatives from all over Minnesota got together at Rosetown Post to enjoy the Pearl Harbor Day Rally.

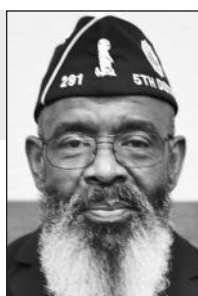
Thanks to all of you who helped with "Bell Ringing" on Dec. 14. And thanks to those of you who made it out to the VA Medical Center on the third

Sunday of the month to visit our fellow veterans.

As soon as the new year (Jan. 4, 2020) starts, we will be attending the Mid-Winter Conference at Richfield Post 435. Registration starts at 8 a.m., and the program will close at 3 p.m.

It would be great if all of our Post commanders could attend this event. If you cannot attend please ensure a representative from your post attends so information can be passed onto your members.

5th District Andrew Rose Sr.



Greetings, Fighting 5th District, as well as the Department of Minnesota. I hope your holidays were joyous and peaceful.

We are still behind in membership and do not have any posts that have reached goal. Johnnie Baker sends out letters and emails and makes phone calls and even offers to pay the dues of members, and there is no response. We are baffled by this.

Up next is the 5th District Oratorical Contest, which will be

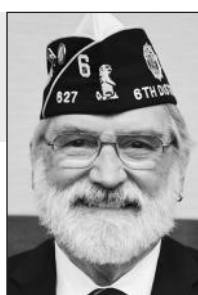
held Feb. 1, with an 8 a.m. start at Richfield Post 435. All are welcome to attend.

Don't forget about the Commander's Project, "Every Third Saturday."

And please don't forget what a hospital, nursing home or home visit could mean to our convalescing veterans.

Happy New Year to all.

6th District Paul Edwards



Greetings to the American Legion Family

Happy New Year everyone! Good luck with your resolutions. I will share the resolution that I make every year that works for me. I resolve to be the best me that I can be.

Looking at membership numbers is a funny thing. Depending on which column of the reports you study, you get different standings. If you look only at percentage of goal achieved, then the 6th District is in fifth place. If you look at total memberships, we are in second behind the 3rd District.

For weekly turn-ins, we are in third for the week, and if you look at the number of posts at goal, we are in first place. I am not saying we should rest, but rather that we should not get down on ourselves. Continue to work toward your post goals

and don't forget to talk about the LEGION Act when talking to potential new members.

Since January is a time of new beginnings, lets think about the Legion in the 21st Century. Think about your own skill sets and how you can contribute to the Legion's success at the Post, District or Department levels. Think about stepping up for a leadership role. There are people who are willing to train and mentor you.

The 6th District Mid-Winter Conference and Sweetheart Rally coming soon. Hope to see lots of you.

The district website is at mn6thdistrict.org.

7th District Dean Knutson



Greetings to all of the 7th District and to all fellow Legion Family Members.

This year has started out on a good note I feel for the Legion Family, and we need to follow through in spreading the good that we can do for fellow veterans and for our communities out only in the time of the holiday season but throughout the whole year.

Whether it be visiting our fellow veterans in the various homes throughout the state, taking a care package to those who are in need or just extending a warm handshake and a

cheerful hello and thank you to them for their service, but it is in these times that I believe that the Legion Family can do so much for each other.

I would like to wish everyone a very good holiday season and a Happy New Year. Let's keep communicating with each other to spread the good of the American Legion Family.

God Bless You and God Bless America!

8th District Anne Koskinen



Greetings.

The 8th District is beginning the practice of sending a District Newsletter, courtesy of our Membership Chair Jennifer Havlick. This will only be sent electronically, so make sure Jennifer has your email address if you want to receive this; she's at: jennifer.havlick@outlook.com.

This article goes out in the January Legionnaire, so I hope that all of you had a Merry Christmas (or Happy Hanukkah) and a Happy New Year. Welcome to 2020; it is the year I call: the year of perfect vision.

There are many things going on as we move into the second half of our Legion year. Legionnaires are encouraged to attend your Post meetings.

The 8th District Winter Conference is Saturday, 25th of January, in Ely at Veterans on the Lake Resort (Fall Lake in Winton). I know there will be some available rooms at the resort, and

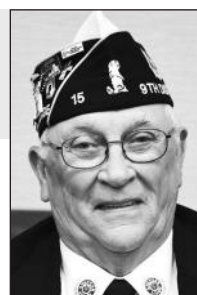
of course there are plenty in the east side of city of Ely, only five miles from the resort. I encourage everyone who can, to join us for the conference. I would sincerely like to meet the other members in our District. I'm sure you have things to share, especially the women veterans. It would be nice to look out onto faces other than a sea of mostly men (as good as that is).

Where are those members from the tip of the Arrowhead country?

I intend to run for a second year as your commander, so I solicit your vote when that comes up at late Spring Conference in June.

The American Legion Twitter feed (@AmericanLegion), has many good links and photos of work going on throughout the nation.

9th District Lowell Philp



My best to all of the 9th District for all the accomplishments we have achieved so far this year.

I would also like to congratulate the auxiliary on their 100th anniversary celebrations. I appreciate all you do to support the Legion.

The SAL has done wonderful work at Legionville. It is up to all of us to keep it up and running. The SAL is growing in numbers. Good luck on future projects.

The Riders have earned themselves great respect. They have shown us what they are capable of doing. Keep on riding!

Keep in mind the Mid-Winter Conference in Moorhead on Jan. 24-25. Encourage someone who has never attended to go this year.

I look forward to seeing everyone.

The 9th District appreciates all the time and effort that Denise Milton and Dennis Henkemeyer put in on the past Fall Conference.

It was a success! Have a blessed Christmas and productive New Year!

10th District Tom Allen



I'm writing this, and it's almost Christmas, so Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

The 10th District had its Christmas gathering on the 14th. We had a very good turnout. We had a lot of fun, then Santa arrived. We took a lot of pictures and were able to donate money for Auxiliary President Brandi Christenson's project. Also, many boxes of clothing were donated for the veterans at the St. Cloud VA.

The 10th District choir honored us with their presents by singing "The Twelve Days of Christmas," plus many more songs. Thank you.

We also had a bad and good ugly sweater contest. I think we were all wearing ugly sweaters.

Membership turn-in was

fabulous. Also, St. Louis Park SAL had three paid members and four new members. Good job.

I want to thank the St. Louis Park Legion for hosting and feeding the gathering group.

Jan. 4 is Mid-Winter at Anoka Legion. I hope we will have a good turnout and get lots of reports in.

Jan. 24 is our snowmobile rally, another good time together.

I hope you did something special for someone this year, whether it be family, a veteran, young or elderly or other. We all need a little more love this time of year.

Did you know ...

... The request form for ceremonial rifles and ammunition is available at MyLegion.org? A change to the procedure is to fill out the form and send it to Department for approval and Department will send it to the final approving authority. This change is from the U.S. Army TACOM.

... The American Legion runs Operation Comfort Warriors? It is dedicated to meeting the needs of wounded, injured or ill military personnel by providing them with comfort items not usually supplied by the government.

... The Baseball Writers of America voted Ted Simmons into the Baseball Hall of Fame? He will be the 82nd American Legion Baseball alumnus to be inducted into Cooperstown next summer. The catcher played for the Cardinals, Pirates and Brewers and was an eight-time All-Star. Other ALB alumni could follow in January, among them are Roger Clemens, Jeff Kent and Scott Rolen.

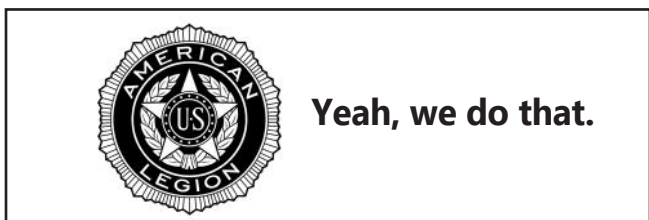
National Commander's Tour

Feb. 17-19, 2020
Please call number listed to reserve your spot:

Location	Meal	Time	Phone
Monday, Feb. 17, 2020			
Adams Post 146	Breakfast	8 a.m.	507-582-3266
Waseca Post 228	Lunch	noon	507-833-9935
Albert Lea Post 56	Dinner*	6 p.m.	507-373-7993
Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2020			
Wells Post 210	Breakfast	8 a.m.	507-553-3012
Madelia Post 19	Lunch	noon	507-642-8106
Redwood Falls Post 38	Dinner*	6 p.m.	507-430-2261

Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2020
Gaylord Post 433 Breakfast 8 a.m. 507-469-2346
New Prague Post 45 Dinner* 6 p.m. 952-457-2129
On Feb. 19, the tour will stop at Minnesota State University, Mankato, around 11 a.m. for lunch with veteran students. No reservations will be taken for the meal time.

*There will be a social hour starting at 5 p.m.





The Auxiliary Bulletin

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President Mary Hendrickson • Secretary Sandie Deutsch

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'Swamped' with renewals has been a good problem

President's Column

Mary Hendrickson



Although I'm writing this column at the halfway point of December, it's already proven to be a full month of activities and traveling. On Dec. 4, I had the opportunity to attend the Waite Park Unit Christmas Party.

The potluck meal was excellent and the attendees in a very jovial mood. I had to leave for home before the bingo and appearance of Santa Claus. My chauffeur and husband, Carl, appreciated the "royal treatment" and enjoyed being surrounded by so many lovely ladies.

Two days later the Department Office staff, NEC Raleen Tolzmann, Past Department President Jean Walker, 1st Vice President Patti Coleman and I attended a small Christmas luncheon. We are blessed to have a friendly and hard-working Department Office staff.

The Dec. 7 Pearl Harbor Rally was well-attended. I enjoyed the opportunity to greet old friends and meet some new members. The membership turn-ins were competitive and elicited some excited responses from the various districts.

The entire American Legion Family has surpassed its totals from the same time last year. I just love it when Department Secretary Sandie emails me saying she's "swamped" with membership renewals.

Please contact Auxiliary members who haven't renewed and encourage them to stay with us. A renewal notice will be mailed out by National in January.

The morning of the Pearl Harbor Rally found me visiting with members of the St. Michael Unit at the Children's Christmas Party they provide for local children. Tenth District President Brandi Christianson and I had our photograph taken with Santa Claus.

My thanks go out to Children and Youth Chairman Robin Dorf who heard about a great

opportunity to help military families who were holding meetings and an evening dinner at the Radisson Blu (attached to the Mall of America) on Friday, Dec. 13. The families were in need of volunteers who could babysit their children while they attended the sessions and banquet. Robin found American Legion Family volunteers, set up work schedules and used the donations collected at Fall Conference to purchase supplies and craft items for the day.

The second week of December found me attending a Christmas Party in Ogilvie and one at my home post, West Duluth 71. The Ogilvie gathering had American Legion Family members from several area posts. Once again, the potluck meal was excellent, and everyone enjoyed receiving a wrapped gift. I'm looking forward to attending two more Christmas parties this month: Bagley on Dec. 18 and Fridley on Dec. 21.

I love receiving invitations to your units and posts during our Centennial Year. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to my President's Projects. Any donation, no matter the size, is greatly appreciated.

As 2019 comes to a close and 2020 hovers on the horizon, The American Legion Auxiliary will continue to Remember, Honor, Serve those who have served in the past and those in uniform today and their families.

A happy, healthy New Year to everyone.

Mary Hendrickson is the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

Attend the Junior Conference coming in April at Waite Park

Saturday, April 18, is the date for the 57th annual Department Junior Conference.

It will be held at Waite Park American Legion Post 428 with the 6th District serving as hosts. A fun evening has been planned for Friday, April 17.

Complete information and the Call to the Junior Conference was included in the January/February Unit mailing.

Be sure you share this information with your Junior Activities Chairman. Make arrangements for your Juniors to attend. We need more Juniors to attend our conference and share their successes with other Junior members so we can grow the program. Junior members are the Auxiliary's future, and we must nurture and promote what they do.

We have a wonderful Honorary Junior President, Emily Suess, who has done a great job promoting Juniors and what they do for our veterans.



Jan Lauby and Sandie Deutsch with the Department of Minnesota attended the effectiveness training that was held in Indianapolis Dec. 8-10. Pictured are Jan Lauby, the new Executive Director of the American Legion Auxiliary Kelly Circle and Sandie Deutsch.

Girls State reservations

In the January/February Unit mailing, every Unit received the necessary information and reservation form to reserve a place for their candidate(s) to the 2020 session of the American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State. Please ask your Unit President for the necessary information.

After your Unit sends in the reservation fee (\$300 per girl) and it has been processed, your Unit will receive a packet of information including a complete registration packet for each girl you are sponsoring. This will be sent to the person who signed the reservation form.

Information will be mailed to each high school in January. The schools will be waiting to be contacted by you. Let them know now if you will be sponsoring a girl.

A Unit may sponsor as many girls from the same high school as it would like to. There is no limit. The candidate(s) must attend a Minnesota public, charter, parochial, private, home-school, or be a resident of Minnesota. All reservation fees will be accepted on a first-come first-served basis. Any person, business or organization may provide the fee to sponsor a girl but this must be run through a Unit.

This year the American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State be held at Bethel University. The session will be held June 14 - 20.

2019-2020 poppy orders

Poppy orders are still being accepted in the Department office. As of this writing, we have received orders from 239 Units. Please get your order into the Department Office. We need to know how many poppies are needed so we can plan accordingly. If you have already ordered and need to place a second order, please do so.

Shipment of poppy orders has been ongoing. Upon receipt of your order, please check it carefully and report any discrepancies to the department office immediately. Please do not wait until Poppy Day.

Annual reports

Annual reports along with Trophy and Award information have been sent to all Unit President's in the January/February Unit Mailing packet.

Please make sure and go through the reports and instruction sheets. If your Unit doesn't participate in all of the programs be sure to fill out the ones you do participate

in and return them. If your Unit is inactive and doesn't participate in any of the programs, please send them back stating "do not participate" on the form.

Second dues notice

The National organization will be sending out a second dues notice around Jan. 15 to all Senior members whose 2020 dues were NOT received and recorded by the National organization by Dec. 8. That means some of you will receive this second notice though you recently paid your dues.

Reminder: Any member who has not paid her 2019 dues by Jan. 31 is considered delinquent and loses her rights, privileges and benefits of membership. Payment of her 2019 dues reinstates her as a member in good standing.

Department President Mary

Just a reminder that President Mary Hendrickson would love to come visit your Unit at a meeting or function. There is a Visit Form on our website or call Sandie at 651-224-7634. You can also email sandie@mnala.org with when and where you would like her to visit.

TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL(S)



On Nov. 20, members of Dan Patch American Legion Auxiliary Unit 643, Savage, delivered supplies to Marion W. Savage Elementary School and to Hidden Valley Elementary School, both in Savage.

Secretary's Notes

Sandie Deutsch



I don't have a whole lot for this month except everyone have a Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year.

We are still extremely busy around the office — I give up on the "slow time" coming back.

Jocelyn has been a god-send to Jan and me. She learns new things every day.

This is kind of a bittersweet month for me. My two amigos, Randy and Al, are gone from the office, my husband is retired from his job, and I am still working. (What's up with that?)

Our Texas family was home for Christmas and my sister and husband flew in from Arizona so a great time was had.

American Legion Post 79 threw a retirement party for

Shorty and what made it very special

was that many of our family

were able to be home. I am now starting my countdown, but remember, you have me through

August. I don't know if that is a blessing or a curse for you, but it is what it is.

Again, only the best for all of you in 2020 — love you all to death.

Sandie Deutsch is the executive secretary for the American Legion Department of Minnesota.

Dec. 11, 2019, Membership:

District	Goal	Membership To Date	Percent of Goal	Membership Last Year 12/10/18
One	4,177	3,039	72.76%	2,941
Two	4,191	3,269	78.00%	3,307
Three	4,064	3,064	75.39%	2,973
Four	624	493	79.01%	464
Five	603	466	77.28%	437
Six	5,393	4,198	77.84%	4,257
Seven	3,369	2,578	76.52%	2,622
Eight	1,363	967	70.95%	948
Nine	3,618	2,744	75.84%	2,859
Ten	4,304	3,077	71.49%	3,048
1982	178	163	91.57%	118
Totals	31,884	24,058	75.45%	23,974

Get the word out on laws for our vets

The American Legion Auxiliary Legislative Program provides information and assistance to American Legion Auxiliary members to advocate for the legislative agenda of The American Legion. We support The American Legion in their legislative endeavors.

The role of the American Legion Auxiliary is to be informed communicators. We need to build relationships and rapport with our state legislators, congressional representatives and our U.S. senators and/or members of their staff. If you already have an established relationship, utilize the relationship to promote The American Legion legislative agenda.

Hand-written letters, telephone calls and office visits are all still appropriate, but, emails, texts, messages and tweets are all acceptable as well.

When you make contact, clearly identify yourself as a constituent, keep it short and

concise, cite facts, be respectful and thank them for their time. You want it to be a positive experience to garner positive results whether now or in the future. Our veterans and enhancing their lives are what matters.

The 2020 Minnesota Legislative session is starting in February. The Minnesota Commanders' Task Force has produced a list of laws it would like to see approved (see Page 1 story), and you can be assured that the American Legion Family will be supporting the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

We want to be sure that all of their programs are fully supported and funded, including maintaining our state veterans homes, and taking a closer look into veterans suicide.

Mark your calendars now to attend Minnesota's Veterans Day on the Hill at the State Capitol on April 20.

We need to have a large representation

Legislative

Patti Coleman



from the American Legion Family, and all veterans, to relay to our legislators that veterans priorities should be on the top of their list of legislation.

Attend the ceremony and make appointments to meet with your state legislators in the afternoon. It will be a great day advocating for our veterans.

See you there!

Patti Coleman is the legislative chairwoman for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

January is National Security Month, and more

The National Security Program promotes a strong national defense supporting servicemembers and their families.

The National Security pages included 2019-2020 Unit Guide lists the three major areas that our National organization would like to see as our emphasis this year. The first is support the emotional and social needs of active, reserve and transitioning military servicemembers and their families.

Units can support active-duty military families by working with a Family Readiness Group, work with a Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program of a local military unit, organize a Welcome to Our Hometown event, work with the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), coordinate donations and assemble servicemember

care packages and family member support packages and provide Blue Star or Gold Star Banners in your community.

The second area of emphasis is to assist military spouses in getting and maintaining employment. Members can serve as a mentor in the career e-mentoring network through the U.S Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Employment Program and Academy Women.

Current military spouses will be virtually paired with more experienced and/or corporate and career mentors for guidance and support Units can promote military spouse job fairs in your community, write an editorial why military spouses make good employees, seek grant funds to help military spouses start small businesses

National Security

Dee Dee Buckley



or create a scholarship fund for military spouses learning a new skill.

The final emphasis is to support the National Security programs of The American Legion. Members can complete a Community Emergency Response Training course, build emergency preparedness kits, donate blood or organize a blood drive at your Legion Post Home, get involved in Citizen Corps Council, Follow the Legion's POW/MIA Empty Chair Resolution 288 for designating a POW/MIA empty chair at all official meetings and work with your Legion Posts

ROTC and JROTC programs.

The Unit Guide lists resources available for most of these programs, but basically, anything you do for our military and their family falls under National Security.

Don't forget to wear red on Fridays. Remember, everyone deployed.

Dee Dee Buckley is the national security chairwoman for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

A LITTLE FUN FOR LITTLE ONES



American Legion Auxiliary Unit 43 of Faribault packed 30 bags for the younger air travelers using the new MSP Armed Forces Service Center. Items were collected and Paulette Jameson and Louise Flom are pictured bagging small toys, dolls, horses, activity, sticker and coloring books, crayons, mechanical pencils, toy soldiers, dinosaurs and aquatic animals, and candy canes in gallon-sized ziplock bags, clear zippered bags and backpacks.

Karen Rasmussen, District 3 Armed Forces Service Center chair, is shown loading Sandie Deutsch's car to take the bags for delivery to the airport.



POSITION OPENING: EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Resumes with cover letters are being accepted for the position of Executive Secretary for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota. Applicants must be eligible and/or a member in good standing of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

This position provides the leadership, management and supervision necessary to ensure that the organization has the proper operational controls, administrative and reporting procedures and systems in place to effectively grow the organization and to ensure financial strength and operating efficiency. This is a full-time position and is based in the St. Paul office. This position requires some weekend meeting and out of state travel.

Applicants must have a degree in business administration or ten years equivalent experience to include at least five years in a managerial or supervisory capacity, preferably in a nonprofit environment. Resumes and cover letters should be sent to:

Mary Hendrickson
American Legion Auxiliary Department President
721 Hantz Road
Cloquet, MN 55720
Or emailed to:
carmar21@msn.com
Please submit your paperwork by Jan. 31, 2019.

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<p>Arizona Getaway March 13-29, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Cindy Peterson •Roundtrip Delta flights •10 nights accommodations •10 breakfasts •Sedona •Tombstone and Bisbee •You can spend time by the pool, on the golf course, or take a complimentary shuttle to nearby attractions. <p>•\$2,499.00 per person double occupancy</p>	<p>Savannah & Charleston April 18 - 26, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Cindy Peterson •Deluxe motorcoach transportation •8 nights accommodations •14 Meals •Guided Trolley Tour of Savannah •Guided tours of St Simons Island and Jekyll Islands •Harbor Cruise in Charleston •Luggage handling <p>•\$1,699.00 per person double occupancy</p>	<p>Monuments of Washington D.C. May 15 - 19, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney •Roundtrip Delta flights •4 nights accommodations •8 Meals •Guided Memorial and Monument Tours •Tram ride through Arlington National Cemetery •Two full day guided tours of Washington D.C. •Admission to George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Garden •WWII Memorial, Capital Hill, Embassy Row, Korean War Veterans Memorial, The Smithsonian, Martin Luther King Jr National Memorial, Lincoln Memorial •Luggage handling <p>•\$1,599.00 per person double occupancy</p>
<p>Rhine River Cruise June 17 - 27, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney •Roundtrip Delta flights •2 nights accommodations at Superior hotels •7 night southbound cruise on the Vista •All meals and entertainment onboard the Vista •All transfers to and from the airport, hotel and ship •All entrance fees outlined in the itinerary •Luggage handling on the ship <p>•\$6,899.00 per person double occupancy</p>	<p>Alaska Tour & Cruise August 15-29, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney •Roundtrip Delta flights •7 nights accommodations •7 night Southbound Cruise on the Grand Princess® •All meals and entertainment onboard the ship •Onboard gratuities and transfers to/from pier •All sightseeing/entrances fees as stated in itinerary •Luggage handling <p>•\$5,099.00 per person double occupancy</p>	<p>Irish Gold Sept. 26-Oct 5, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney •Roundtrip flights •8 nights accommodations with luggage handling •14 Meals •Blarney Castle •Trinity College & The Book of Kells •Cliffs of Moher · House of Waterford Crystal •Ring of Kerry · Kylemore Abbey & Gardens <p>•\$4,799.00 per person double occupancy</p>



Are you the son of a veteran? Maybe you are a veteran *and* the son or grandson of one? Either way, join your local Sons of the American Legion.

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Get ready now for BUDDY CHECKS

As members of The American Legion, we watch out for each other. One way is through regular Buddy Checks. This year, on the week of The American Legion's birthday, March 15, gather a team to call or visit absent members or former members of The American Legion. Help them renew or rejoin the organization, ask them if they need any help or assistance in life, and invite them to an upcoming Legion or veterans-based event. Get them involved among the local veterans. Make them feel welcome. Listen to their input. Make sure to swap contact information. And thank them for their time.



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