



From left are Marissa LaCourt, Kelley Adelsman and Linda Dvorak. They stand in front of a Rene-Mal reproduction titled "America" that the French government presented to The American Legion in 1922.



## What is Legion College like? 2 graduates share their experience at National HQ in Indy

INDIANAPOLIS — Marissa LaCourt of Apple Valley Post 1776 and Linda Dvorak of New Prague Post 45 attended National American Legion College in December.

Dvorak is the Department of Minnesota membership director this year and helped launch Minnesota

American Legion College three years ago. LaCourt chairs the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee and is a Minnesota Legion College graduate.

The two new National Legion College graduates were excited about sharing their experience. It

is a weeklong leadership program that convenes in the same fourth-floor room as the National Executive Committee at the National HQ in Indianapolis.

Minnesota past department chaplain Kelley Adelsman of Pine Island

Continued on Page 2



VA Undersecretary Shereef Elnahal speaks on Dec. 12 at the federal agency's Minneapolis hospital.

## PACT Act opens doors

### VA undersecretary visits Minneapolis

MINNEAPOLIS — The federal PACT Act passed last summer expanded toxic presumptive conditions for American veterans, making it easier to receive VA medical care. Veterans who have been denied in the past or who have never sought it should go through the VA's new toxic exposure screenings.

That was the message of Dr. Shereef Elnahal, undersecretary for health for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, when he visited the Minneapolis VA Medical Center on Dec. 12.

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## Marine struggles with civilian world until he reconnects via 23rd Veteran

BROOKLYN CENTER — The tale is as old as veterans in America. Veterans exit the military. They don't stay connected with veterans. They lose a sense of purpose and that feeling of camaraderie. They struggle.

But when they return to the veterans community, their fellow veterans are there for them, to help them in their recovery.

Daniel Crawford, 53, has bounced back from alcoholism and life in limbo thanks to his involvement in Duluth-based 23rd Veteran and its peer-to-peer adventure and fitness program. He now has come to know The American Legion's mission, and he hopes the two find ways to work together.

For this Marine, it comes after years of post-military struggle.

Crawford was born in Fridley and moved to Kinney in 1976. He was a kid in the town when the Kinney City Council "seceded" from the Union in 1978 in an attempt to draw attention to federal, state and local bureaucratic red tape that prevented repairs to its crumbling water system. The humorous idea was to get foreign aid instead. The stunt made the "NBC Nightly News," and, later that year, the city got its money, though not as foreign aid.

In eighth-grade, Crawford returned to the Twin Cities. He attended Centennial High School in Circle Pines.

# A better life



Marine veteran Daniel Crawford gets into the leaning rest at Target Field in December before having his picture taken. Crawford and Kurt Roettjer, background, were working a booth at MACV Home for the Holidays right next to The American Legion Department of Minnesota. The leaning rest is the push-up position. Crawford, a member at Brooklyn Center Post 630, demonstrated how working out three times a week with his 23rd Veteran recon class has been good for his strength.

He knew his future was not college, so he enlisted in the Army Reserves four days after his 17th birthday. He went to Fort Benning for basic between his junior and senior years. During his senior year, he decided to pursue active duty and seek technology training. He switched his enlistment to the Marines. He graduated in 1987 and entered the Marines in August.

It was back to boot camp, this time in San Diego. He went to communications electronics school at 29 Palms Marine Base but did not finish, as the Marines sent him into aircraft maintenance as a data analyst. His training was at the naval air station in Meridian, Miss.

Crawford worked with helicopters. He was stationed at Marine Corps Air Station New River, outside of

Jacksonville, N.C., and just north of Camp Lejeune.

Yes, he spent times once in a while turning a wrench, but mainly what he did was logistics, troubleshooting and making sure tasks were accomplished properly.

He spent five years at MCAS New River and deployed three times: with

Continued on Page 8

## New department service officer was active in the Legion Ray Kane is an organ recipient

ST. PAUL — The American Legion Department of Minnesota Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee has hired Army veteran Ray Kane of Hastings Post 47 to be the next department service officer. He will office on the first floor of the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis.

Kane, who lives in Cottage Grove, started Nov. 22. He also works as the gambling manager for the St. Paul Park & Newport Lions International Club.

"Ray's passion and determination to help veterans was just unparalleled among the applicants," said VA&R Chairwoman Marissa LaCourt. "We are sure he is going to do a fine job of piloting the ship and handling new ideas."

The prior DSO, Jeremy Wolfsteller, moved on in November.

Kane graduated from Eagan High School in 1991 and went to basic in July that year at Fort Benning. He was all set to be an 11B infantryman for the

Army Reserve, but the powers that be shut down the unit in Cannon Falls, and he had to retrain for a new specialty.

He ended up a radar surveillance operator with the 134th Military Intelligence Battalion at Fort Snelling. He did that for a few years, and as soon

as Kane made sergeant, the Army closed the battalion. He was recruited to the Minnesota National Guard, and he served



Ray Kane

as a Bradley Fighting Vehicle operator with a 34th Infantry Division unit drilling out of the East St. Paul Armory.

Kane became a Bradley trainer, and he did a lot of pre-basic recruiting, too. He is mentioned in former state representative and motivational speaker

John Kriesel's book. Kriesel, who lost his legs and two buddies to a roadside bomb in the Iraq War, was one of those

young pups Kane trained. Because of his busy civilian work schedule, Kane exited the National Guard in 2006.

In his civilian career, he managed a child care center, then worked many years in retail as a manager. Retail managers work difficult hours.

In 2012, while he was manager of the T.J. Maxx in Brooklyn Park — a long commute from Cottage Grove — he was driving home after work and his vision of the road was blacking out.

Kane pulled over, spotted  
Continued on Page 2



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# DSO had a career in retail store management

Continued from Page 1

a hospital sign, then drove to Woodwinds Hospital in Woodbury. He gave his car keys to a security guard and woke up three days later in the intensive care unit.

It turns out, he is a Type II diabetic. His kidneys were at 20 percent, and, in some ways, he could trace some of the condition back to youth. He was put on dialysis and sent home.

He waited on a transplant list for six months. On Nov. 10, 2012, doctors at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester gave him a new kidney and a new pancreas. The old ones are still in his body, too. So he has three kidneys and two pancreases.

His donor was a 42-year-old woman from Georgia.

"That's why I say my best parts are my girl parts," Kane said.

Kane has two eagle tattoos, and he wasn't easy to put under before the surgery. He heard one of the nurses called one of the eagles a parrot. He was still awake and aware, and he insisted it was not a parrot. The last thing he remembers before the anesthesia finally set in was a doctor saying, "We're not going to call your eagle a parrot anymore."

The scar extends from his sternum to below his navel.

Kane never returned to work. He used the new chapter in his life to go to volunteer in the community and attend college at Inver Hills Community College, where he got involved in the Veterans Resource Center. He graduated in June 2016.

He set out to become a nurse, but he learned that, with his diabetes and organ transplants, working as a nurse and encountering the sick would not be good for his immune system.

The college's veterans coordinator, Sue Flannigan, told him his passion was veterans. He ought to pursue a career in that direction. He began to volunteer with Beyond the Yellow Ribbon in Cottage Grove and at Post 98 in St. Paul Park, where he soon became the 2nd vice commander and had to run events.

Kane went through another surgery in May 2020. Doctors removed half a foot of damaged intestines caused by pills he must take. It was right after the surgery that Kane organized a Legion and Yellow Ribbon drive to provide care packages to National Guard troops deployed to civil unrest in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

His retail experience became handy for understanding gambling numbers, and he began as the assistant gambling manager

for the Lions in June 2020, and by January 2021, he was the gambling manager. The club oversees pulltab booths at Franke's Corner Bar and Broadway Bar & Grill, both in St. Paul Park.

Meanwhile, the Cottage Grove Beyond the Yellow Ribbon expanded to include Newport, St. Paul Park, Grey Cloud Island Township and Hastings.

"I've been solving veterans issues for 10 years," Kane said. "When this position came open, I was running for department historian, but this is my passion."

With the new staff position, Kane's campaign for historian ends. Christopher Anderson of Hastings Post 47 has decided to run for the spot.

In addition to assisting veterans, Kane will coordinate with posts needing to help veterans through the Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund.

Since starting, Kane has been conducting follow-up visits with veterans, getting to know VA hospital leaders, talking with patient advocates and making veterans aware of rights and benefits.

Kane has two dogs and no children. He is in a long-term relationship with a Hastings woman named Amanda, who has two children of her own.

# National Legion College taught leadership qualities and how different personalities can get along

Continued from Page 1

Post 184 was there, too, but as a facilitator. She already was a National Legion College graduate.

**Q: How time consuming is the curriculum at Legion College?**

**Dvorak:** It can be time-consuming. It depends on your group. It depends on the district

you are in and how well you work together. But it's a pretty intense course, I thought.

**LaCourt:** For me, in my group, we all worked really well together. We found that working together while we were having dinner worked much better than sitting around a table arguing. You begin early morning and you are not back in your room until 9 o'clock at night.

**Q: What was the most difficult subject matter?**

**LaCourt:** For me it was the resolution writing. I volunteered to take that on, and the reason was I knew that it was my weakness, and I wanted to get better.

**Dvorak:** I think that all of the subject matters were equally the same. I had an issue with resolutions, but I think that was because I didn't understand our resolution. If I had to pick one subject, I would say probably the strategic planner. It's just a lot to comprehend; how to do the strategic plan and what's involved. They also talk a lot about retention and membership, and those kinds of topics I understand well.

**Q: How do you feel National American Legion College will benefit you?**

**Dvorak:** This Legion College is not about the programs. It's about the processes. I think knowing the processes will help with what's going on in the future. Watching what [husband] Mark [Dvorak] went through as department commander, and knowing that's something I would like to achieve, I just think Legion College was a great class for me to attend.

**LaCourt:** National was the thing I didn't know anything about. So it gave me some perspective on what goes on at the national level. There's a lot of history in that building. I made a lot of jokes, and everyone in my group was like, "You know what? That would be a crazy ride if Marissa was the national commander." It put everything in perspective to help me set my goals. It was fantastic.



Marissa LaCourt, left, and Linda Dvorak sit at the Minnesota desk at National Headquarters.

**Q: How do you plan to use the new knowledge from Legion College for The American Legion?**

**LaCourt:** You do a pre-assignment about your leadership style. It teaches more about your pitfalls and what you need to be aware of when you go into situations, like how to get a job done when you all have very dominant personalities and how we all have our own strengths and weaknesses.

**Dvorak:** We are speaking about personalities, and I am not the dominant personality. It was very interesting to see what my personality was and say, "You know what? They are spot on." It's all part of the big picture, but I would like to take some of this that I have learned and put it into our Minnesota Legion College and just know that Minnesota Legion College is a stepping stone to the National Legion College. I would love to see more blue caps going to this National Legion College. I really would. They would have an eye-opening experience.

**Q: What would you do to support and promote Legion College for younger veterans?**

**Dvorak:** It's about publicizing it, presenting it. I didn't know about Legion College until Mark went, and Mark

didn't know about it until someone said, "Hey, you should go." I think if we bring it up and talk about it more, people will be more enthused about it. That really is what needs to happen.




**LaCourt:** I was not the youngest person in the room, when I went to National Legion College. That is something that has not happened very often in my Legion exploits, and that was very interesting, to know that I am not alone. I am not this lone millennial that is climbing the ladder. I am entering Year 4 of my membership, and I thought I had to ask permission. Now, I realize I just have to tell people I want to go. Anyone is welcome to attend district, department and national events, and for Minnesota Legion College or National Legion College, there is a selection process, but anyone is welcome to apply.

**Q: Is there anything else you would like the say about Legion College?**

**LaCourt:** My group, we're tight. We have not gone a day yet without communicating. We have a group text chain, and we are all very active in it. We are from everywhere in this country. There were people from Mississippi to Montana that were in my group, and we have found that we still have this great relationship, and we are all from different age groups, all different eras. It doesn't matter. We're still bonded.

**Dvorak:** We also have a group chat, plus a group email, where we send stuff back and forth. We had the oldest member of this class in our group, and he was 84. Actually, our class ran from 30 to 84, so that's a 54-year difference. To see the difference between the boomers, the Gen Xers, the millennials, it was interesting. We worked together as a team, and we got the job done.

In the after-the-interview conversation, Dvorak and LaCourt discussed whose group at Legion College had the most fun.

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# AMERICAN LEGION

## Endorsements

### Post 1776's Joe Tappainer endorsed for chaplain

Joe Tappainer has been endorsed for Department of Minnesota chaplain by Apple Valley Post 1776.

Tappainer entered the U.S. Army in June 1981, two weeks after graduating from high school. He graduated at the top of his basic training/AIT class and was asked to stay on for one more cycle to be a drill corporal.

In January 1982, Tappainer joined A Co. 3rd Infantry, better known as "The Old Guard" in Washington, D.C. He would stay in this assignment until March 1987. During this time, he rose from private first class (E-3) to staff sergeant (E-6). He would perform hundreds of funerals in Arlington National Cemetery and other cemeteries as part of a marching platoon, a firing party commander or casket bearer. He performed

many ceremonies at the White House, the Pentagon and Fort Meyer.

Tappainer married Carla Osness in 1981 and was sent to Korea to be an infantry combat squad leader in the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment (Mechanized), 2nd Infantry Division in March 1987. During his time there, he led multiple day recons and night ambush patrols, along with manning the most forward guard post in Korea. Tappainer spent a total 129 days on the DMZ.

He was discharged after seven years in the Army. He attended college, where he earned an associate of applied science and



Joe Tappainer

a bachelor of science in electrical engineering. He joined The American Legion in 2004 and has held many positions at Post 1776 including post chaplain for two years.

He has also held multiple positions in the district. Tappainer has been the chaplain for Dakota County Elks Lodge 2832. He was ordained in June 2019 and is licensed in the state of Minnesota.

Tappainer knows that predecessors left big shoes to fill but feels that he could do a good job as department chaplain looking after the spiritual health and well-being of American Legion members.

### Chris Anderson of Post 47 backed for historian

Christopher Anderson Sr. has been endorsed by Hastings Post 47 for Department of Minnesota historian for 2023-2024.

Anderson is a member of Hastings Post 47 and has been a member of The American Legion for 11 years.

At Post 47, he is serving his second year as commander and is membership director.

At the 3rd District level, Anderson proudly serves as vice commander. At Department of Minnesota

level, he has brought his many technical talents to service on the Media & Communications Committee.

Anderson is eligible for membership in The American Legion through his service in the U.S. Marine Corps, during which time he served in the Persian Gulf War. He is a graduate of the Minnesota American Legion College.

Anderson is a senior engineering technician with Dakota County. He has worked for the county for 18

years. He runs the materials testing laboratory.

He has two sons (both proud Sons of The American Legion members) in Moorhead, and his wife, Christine, is a member of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Along with being a member of The American Legion, Chris is a proud member of The American Legion Media Alliance, the Marine Corps League and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.



Christopher Anderson

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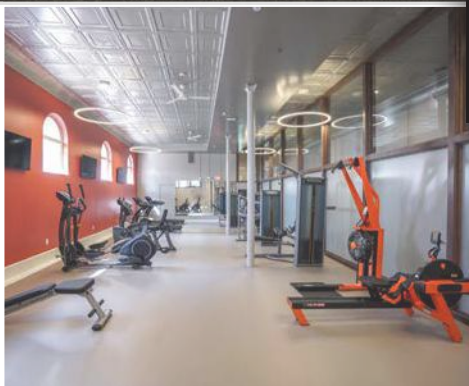


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# Happy New Year, Minn. Legion Family

The new year always brings new life and new opportunities. The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee is working hard to ensure that our veterans get the services they need. To that end, they have hired Raymond Kane as our new Department of Minnesota service officer, a position we often call the "DSO."

Kane is excited about his new position and role in the Department of Minnesota. He is out there making great contacts and assisting veterans across Minnesota.

Our Minnesota Veterans Assistance Fund has assisted dozens of veterans and their families across the state with emergency needs. Our posts are working hard to ensure veterans and their families have a happy holiday through meals, gifts and other vital services. It is Minnesota American Legion Foundation Fund 85.

Our Minnesota American Legion Family Suicide Coalition is around the state on several suicide prevention

## Commander's Column

Jennifer Havlick



programs with a goal of ending veteran suicide.

We have our new ad-hoc Committee for Internal Affairs, and it is renewing our Department of Minnesota By-laws and Constitution as part of its mandate. This is in addition to several other tasks that will assist our department moving forward.

Our Media and Communication Committee is working hard on our social media footprint, along with our new Department of Minnesota Patriots Podcast, hosted by Mike Parry.

We have two new National Legion College graduates, Linda Dvorak and Marissa LaCourt, both from 3rd District, along with facilitator Kelley Adelman, who served at National Legion College.

Posts and districts are working on their Oratorical Contests along with planning their

mid-winter conferences. I would like to thank all our posts on helping us make our 75 percent membership goal.

Way to go. Keep up the great work.

2023 looks to be a busy successful year for our department. I look forward to seeing you all out and about. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need assistance from your district or department; we are here to help your post to be as successful as possible. Have a great year and get out there and do great things.

*Jennifer Havlick of Duluth Wisted Post 28 is the commander of The American Legion Department of Minnesota. Her theme is "Honoring Our Past by Securing Our Future."*

# January is a time to count blessings

A new year is upon us; it will be hard for a few days to write "2023" instead of "2022."

Here's hoping everyone had a blessed Christmas or holiday season. The joys of this time of year are numerous for me, especially when we can watch the little ones open their presents. There's so much excitement with the little ones, and the bigger ones, too.

Just the fact that we are together for the occasion is a joy to me. Here's hoping you all experienced similar feelings this time of year.

Now Christmastime has passed and the new year is here. January can seem like a dreary and lonely time of year for some. They call the indoors-too-much restless feeling we tend to get "cabin fever."

I find it to be a time to look back at the last year and to count my blessings that the Heavenly Father has given to me. When we look back, sometimes we don't see the blessings until much later, and then it's like a light bulb comes on.

## Chaplain's Corner

Larry Otto



"Yes! That was a blessing!" Besides my wife and family, one of my biggest blessings has been being your department chaplain, along with meeting so many nice people within the American Legion Family. These are friendships that will last a life time, and I thank you for that.

God has blessed me in so many ways this past year, it's hard to count them all. May we all count our many blessings today, tomorrow and always. Let us praise God from whom all blessings flow. Paraphrased from the book of Psalms, Chapter 105, verses 1-5, "Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, remembering the wondrous works that he has done in your life. The Lord has been good to us even if we are unable to see it right now."

Get out and visit with family,

friends, neighbors and those who are not able to get around. Stop at a care center, call on a fellow veteran, and remember those on active duty both here and abroad.

"Be the One" to someone in need.

*Remember  
God is Good-All the Time  
And  
All the Time-God is Good!*

Until next month, may God shower you with his peace and grace.

*Larry Otto of Ellendale Post 296 is the chaplain for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.*

# MDVA accomplished a lot in 2022

I recently had the opportunity to reflect on the past year during an interview on Minnesota Military Radio where I was joined by Gov. Tim Walz.

Walz, a veteran himself, is a staunch supporter of our veteran community and an advocate for ensuring that our veterans receive the care and support they have earned.

The governor and I shared some time together in service with the Minnesota Army National Guard. We were a good team then and make a good team now, with a commitment to serve Minnesota's veterans.

One of the biggest accomplishments of the last year — and of the last few decades! — was the successful passing of the Veterans and Military Affairs Omnibus Bill. This created a new precedent that I believe should be followed for years to come. This legislation consolidated a number of veteran funding requests. It:

- Funded the Post-9/11 Service Bonus.
- Expanded funding for three new state Veterans Homes in Bemidji, Montevideo and Preston and one new state Veterans Cemetery in Redwood Falls; all will be opening in mid-2023.
- Increased funding for the congressionally chartered veterans service organizations: The American Legion Department of Minnesota, Amvets Department of Minnesota, Disabled American Veterans Department of Minnesota, Military Order of the Purple Heart Department of Minnesota, Paralyzed Veterans of America Minnesota Chapter

and Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Minnesota.

- Increased funding to the county veterans service officers working in 87 counties.
- Expanded funding to help end veteran homelessness.
- Provided infrastructure funding for the Fisher House in Fargo (where many Minnesota veterans living in northwestern Minnesota receive care) and for the Veterans Campground on Big Marine Lake.

When asked what I am most proud of, I highlight our continuing work to end veteran homelessness in Minnesota. In the last year, two more Continuums of Care (regions) declared an effective end to veteran homelessness in their communities.

Now eight of 10 Continuums of Care have reached this goal; only Hennepin and Ramsey counties remain.

New funding in the omnibus bill supported even more homelessness programs including:

- Efforts by MACV to secure new properties and provide support services.
- More alternatives such as temporary shelter in hotels.
- Increased incentives for property owners and landlords who agree to rent to high-barrier veterans

A memorable moment of 2022 was the return to an in-person event for the official state Veterans Day program this

## Year in Review

Larry Herke



year. It was great to see people in person. There were more than 400 people in attendance.

It is also impressive to gather together so many leaders including Gov. Walz, Minnesota National Guard leader Maj. Gen. Shawn Manke, and members of the congressional delegation from Minnesota, who this year included U.S. Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, and U.S. Reps. Dean Phillips, Ilhan Omar and Betty McCollum. We all enjoyed a delicious breakfast and the camaraderie of being in person together.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we are busy preparing for the 2023 legislative session. We will continue to work to end homelessness among veterans and prevent Veteran suicide. Opening three new Veterans Homes and one new state Veterans Cemetery will be a major effort.

And we are also exploring how to increase support for veteran caregivers, among other initiatives. We welcome your involvement and support!

If you need information or support on any veteran issue, please visit our website, contact your county veterans service officer, or contact LinkVet at 1-888-LinkVet.

Thank you for your service!

*Larry Herke of Sauk Centre Post 67 is the commissioner of veterans affairs for the state of Minnesota. He leads the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, which oversees the Minnesota Veterans Homes, Minnesota Veterans Cemeteries and other state veteran-related programs.*

# Mail Call

Send letters to the editor for Mail Call to [tengstrom@mnlegion.org](mailto:tengstrom@mnlegion.org).

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

## Thanks for the birthday cards

To Whom It May Concern: A Christmas greeting to you and your family.

I have been buried in over 200 birthday cards that came from all over the country. A brief in the December 2022 issue of the Legionnaire asked readers to send cards for my 100th birthday, and it told a little bit about my life, too. It was responsible for a great many birthday cards from all over our state.

My children also put on a great birthday party for me a few days before the event, so now I'm trying to get relaxed and prepare for the Christmas season. May God, in His infinite kindness, look lovingly on you and all of your family for this season and for years to come.

**Edward W. Crawford**  
Waite Park Post 428

## Why did DEC pick stale logo?

As I was flipping through The Minnesota Legionnaire, I stumbled upon pictures of two logos on page 7 of the December issue. I was disappointed but not surprised to find out that the unimaginative and stale logo was selected.

The selection reinforces my impression of The American Legion as a stale and non-inclusive organization. What a missed opportunity to show the Minnesota American Legion as more than just a state outline.

I hope the Department Executive Committee sees the error and makes an immediate correction. Thank you.

**Chris Moore**  
St. Paul  
Minnesota Post 1982

## Thanks for story on Smith

What a pleasant surprise to pop open the December e-edition of The Minnesota Legionnaire. The Page 1 story you wrote about Sauk Centre Post 67's own Nathan Smith is pure pleasure to read.

Thank you for your coverage. Great choice of photos. I wish I had known you were here; maybe I could have shaken your hand. Please keep up your very good work. Happy Holidays.

**John Steffes**  
Newsletter Editor  
Sauk Centre Post 67



# The Minnesota Legionnaire

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Official publication of  
The American Legion  
Department of Minnesota

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# Taps



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

Name of Deceased	Age	Date of Death	Branch	Era	Cont. Years	Post
<b>Anderson, Johnny D.</b>	91	11/18/22	Army	Korea	42	Cambridge Post 290
<b>Andrews, Thomas W.</b>	82	11/13/22	Air Force	Vietnam	29	Spring Grove Post 249
Note: He retired as a first sergeant after 30-plus years in the Air Force and Air National Guard. He spearheaded and participated in many humanitarian missions.						
<b>Bastian, LeRoy K.</b>	93	11/25/22	Army	Korea	3	New Ulm Post 132
<b>Bellefy, Lawrence J.</b>	87	12/7/22	Air Force	Korea	40	Bagley Post 16
<b>Bohn, Reynold M.</b>	86	4/30/22	Army	Germany	4	Jordan Post 3
<b>Bolin, Richard P.</b>	97	11/2/22	Coast Guard	WWII	76	St. James Post 33
<b>Borchert, Robert</b>	77	9/19/22	Army	Vietnam	30	Faribault Post 43
<b>Brancich, Gerald F.</b>	81	11/14/22	Air Force	Vietnam	12	Winona Post 9
Note: He was the senior veterinary officer in the Air Force and served at Karamursel Air Station in Turkey.						
<b>Brouwer, Arnold</b>	90	10/25/22	Army	Korea	61	Clara City Post 485
<b>Brown, Gerald L.</b>	95	11/11/22	Navy	WWII	33	Albert Lea Post 56
<b>Brown, Kenneth P.</b>	42	11/23/22	Marines	Persian Gulf	5	Monticello Post 260
<b>Brown, Robert C.</b>	100	8/19/22	Army	WWII	31	Keewatin Post 452
Note: He served as an ambulance driver in Africa, Corsica, France and Germany.						
<b>Brustad, Paul M.</b>	80	12/3/22	Army	Vietnam	56	Bagley Post 16
<b>Bunke, Dan R.</b>	75	11/16/22	Navy	Vietnam	30	Winona Post 9
Note: He was a Seabee who served three tours in Antarctica constructing McMurdo Station at the southern tip of Ross Island.						
<b>Bureau, Thomas H.</b>	81	12/7/22	Air Force	Vietnam	36	Fergus Falls Post 30
Note: He was 9th District commander 2000-01 and department vice commander 2005-06, in addition to various post-level positions. He served as district finance officer, and he was on the department Finance Committee and VA&R Committee, as well as the national VA&R Committee.						
<b>Burich, Charles J.</b>	96	11/18/22	Army	WWII	78	Hutchinson Post 96
Note: He served in France and Germany.						
<b>Christensen, Ronald D.</b>	82	10/12/22	Army NG	Vietnam	28	Breckenridge Post 53
<b>Czycalla, Kurt A.</b>	82	11/1/22	Army	Vietnam	23	New London Post 537
<b>Dalen, Robert</b>	79	12/1/22	Army	Vietnam	2	Little Falls Post 46
<b>Davidson, Duff P.</b>	81	12/3/22	Army	Vietnam	35	Faribault Post 43
<b>Davis, Victor E.</b>	90	12/4/22	Marines	Korea	49	New Ulm Post 132
<b>Debner, Michael S.</b>	67	11/15/22	Air Force	Leb/Gren	32	Waconia Post 150
Note: The Air Force brought him to North Dakota, California, Japan, Nevada, Kansas, South Korea, the Philippines and Mississippi.						
<b>DeRuyter, Alvin D.</b>	73	11/29/22	Army	Vietnam	6	New London Post 537
<b>Ebnet, Albert L.</b>	91	11/9/22	Navy	Korea	30	Springfield Post 257
Note: He was stationed on USS Morgan County (LST 1048) in Operation Wigwam, an underwater atomic test in May 1955.						
<b>Ehlers, Stanley W.</b>	93	11/20/22	Army	Korea	13	Northfield Post 84
<b>Eischens, Mervin E.</b>	93	11/8/22	Army	Korea	59	St. Leo Post 524
Note: He was the mayor of St. Leo from 1959 to 2000.						
<b>Emery, Willard R.</b>	96	11/15/22	Army	Korea	26	Northfield Post 84
<b>Fenner, Kenneth V.</b>	76	10/17/22	Navy	Vietnam	51	Litchfield Post 104
<b>Froland, Harvey A.</b>	77	12/11/22	Army	Vietnam	23	Lowry Post 253
<b>Gajeski, Gene A.</b>	77	11/22/22	Army	Vietnam	59	Stephen Post 390
<b>Gill, James D.</b>	67	11/20/22	Navy	Vietnam	36	Breckenridge Post 53
Note: He was past post commander. He served aboard the destroyer USS William Wood.						
<b>Gilligan, James P.</b>	94	10/31/22	Army	Korea	64	Northfield Post 84
<b>Glynn, Dennis J.</b>	87	12/4/22	Navy	Korea	2	Faribault Post 43
<b>Gravelle, Thomas H.</b>	82	12/19/22	Army NG	Vietnam	20	Aitkin Post 86
<b>Greig, James L.</b>	93	11/12/22	Army	Korea	46	Albert Lea Post 56
<b>Gruenhagen, Donald F.</b>	89	11/23/22	Army	Korea	18	Glencoe Post 95
Note: He was past post adjutant.						
<b>Hanauer, Duane L.</b>	84	11/13/22	Navy	Korea	26	Holdingford Post 211
<b>Hart, Gene A.</b>	88	11/20/22	Army	Vietnam	32	Faribault Post 43
<b>Hemmann, Gary T.</b>	77	11/11/22	Army	Vietnam	18	Glencoe Post 95
<b>Hemmesch, Robert B.</b>	79	11/20/22	Army	Vietnam	40	Paynesville Post 271
<b>Henry, Richard L.</b>	86	11/2/22	Army	Vietnam	33	Mabel Post 299
<b>Herman, Earl M.</b>	94	10/20/22	Army	Korea	46	Detroit Lakes Post 15
<b>Hesse, David L.</b>	78	11/16/22	Army	Vietnam	20	New Ulm Post 132
<b>Hillesheim, Gilbert H.</b>	90	11/22/22	Navy	Korea	29	New Ulm Post 132
<b>Holmson, Duane R.</b>	76	12/2/22	unavail.	unavail.	11	Richfield Post 435
<b>Hunt, Edward B.</b>	89	10/15/22	Air Force	Korea	24	Elk River Post 112
<b>Huyber, Steven R.</b>	75	11/28/22	Navy	Vietnam	31	Rochester Post 92
<b>Iliff, Maurice R.</b>	95	11/10/22	Army	Korea	66	Barnum Post 415
Note: He drove a deuce-and-a-half in the war, supplying front lines.						
<b>Jacobson, James C.</b>	80	11/8/22	Army	Vietnam	32	Hopkins Post 320
<b>Jacobson, Marion F.</b>	73	11/1/22	Air Force	Vietnam	5	Pine River Post 613
<b>Kaluza, Stephen J.</b>	73	11/8/22	Army	Vietnam	49	Waite Park Post 428
<b>Kane, Robert J.</b>	97	11/10/22	Navy	WWII/Korea	41	Rosetown Post 542
Note: He served aboard the USS Amick destroyer escort in WWII in electrical engineering. He re-enlisted during the Korean War, and he served in Naval Reserve aviation at Wold-Chamberlain Field.						
<b>Karp, Michael J.</b>	95	11/2/22	Navy	WWII	27	Faribault Post 43
Note: The war ended before his ship reached Japan, and it was diverted to Okinawa to bring troops home.						
<b>Kary, Richard E.</b>	91	12/3/22	Army	Korea	49	Albert Lea Post 56
<b>Koenen, Dale A.</b>	72	10/26/22	Army NG	Vietnam	51	Clara City Post 485
<b>Kramer, Ralph F.</b>	91	11/20/22	Army	Korea	50	Watkins Post 453
Note: He was a combat medic at the Battle of Pork Chop Hill in Korea.						
<b>Krause, Edwin A.</b>	96	9/6/22	Army	WWII	37	Faribault Post 43
Note: He was in Germany for clean-up at the end of the war.						
<b>Leistico, Vern A.</b>	78	12/9/22	Army	Vietnam	40	Worthington Post 5
<b>Lenz, Robert L.</b>	81	8/10/21	Army	Vietnam	33	Jordan Post 3
<b>Ling, Lyle L.</b>	72	12/2/22	Navy	Vietnam	41	Round Lake Post 461
<b>Link, Donald E.</b>	83	11/20/22	Army	Vietnam	42	Caledonia Post 191
<b>Lovald, Kenneth A.</b>	79	11/20/22	Navy	Vietnam	52	Hutchinson Post 96
<b>Mathison, Delroy P.</b>	85	11/14/22	Army NG	Vietnam	17	Detroit Lakes Post 15
<b>McLaughlin, Richard F.</b>	87	12/1/22	Marines	Korea/VN	5	Lake City Post 110
<b>Mickelson, Robert M.</b>	79	12/1/22	Navy	Vietnam	37	Litchfield Post 104
Note: He was past post commander.						
<b>Miller, Franklin L.</b>	77	11/29/22	Navy	Vietnam	54	Janesville Post 281
<b>Miller, John C.</b>	72	12/11/22	Navy	Vietnam	9	St. Joseph Post 328
Note: He served aboard the USS Anchorage.						
<b>Navratil, Allen R.</b>	74	11/23/22	Army	Vietnam	38	Bagley Post 16
<b>Pangerl, Alexander J.</b>	93	11/16/22	Army	Korea	63	Pine City Post 51
<b>Parkin, David E.</b>	75	11/13/22	Army	Vietnam	34	Anoka Post 102
Note: He received a Purple Heart Medal in the war.						

## All-Family Events Calendar

- Jan. 19:** 80 percent membership target
- Feb. 4:** Sweetheart Rally, Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172
- Feb. 15:** 85 percent membership target
- Feb. 26-March 1:** Washington Conference
- March 15:** 90 percent membership target
- March 18-April 22:** Minnesota American Legion Bowling Tournament, Sundance Lanes, Dayton
- March 25:** ALA DEC Meeting, Dept HQ
- April 15:** DEC/Appreciation Rally, New Prague Post 45
- April 16-21:** National Commander's Tour of Minnesota
- April 19:** 95 percent membership target
- April 20-23:** Minnesota Legion College, Camp Ripley
- April 22:** Department President's Testimonial Dinner, Spicer Post 545
- May 13:** Department Commander's Testimonial, New Prague Post 45
- May 17:** 100 percent membership target
- June 11-17:** Minnesota Boys State, St. John's Univ.
- July 4:** Forest Lake Post 225 Fourth of July Parade
- July 12:** DEC, Jackpot Junction Casino, Redwood Falls
- July 13-15:** Department Convention, Jackpot Junction Casino, Redwood Falls
- July 26:** Legacy Run Kickoff Party, location TBD
- July 27-30:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Sr. State Tournament, Rochester
- July 27-30:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Jr. State Tournament, Burnsville
- July 28-30:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. II Sr. State Tournament, Roseau
- July 28-30:** Minnesota American Legion Fastpitch Softball State Tournament, New York Mills
- Aug. 4-6:** Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. II Jr. State Tournament, Granite Falls
- Aug. 19:** Fund 85 Run (Minn. Veterans Assistance Fund), Forest Lake Post 225
- Aug. 25-31:** National Convention, Charlotte, N.C.
- Oct. 12-15:** Minnesota Legion College, Camp Ripley
- Oct. 26-28:** Department Fall Conference, River's Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud



Dan Morgan/St. Paul North End Post 474  
 "After that last German checkpoint, I think we went too far east."

## Department of Corrections

Fourth District Commander David Dahl was misidentified as the commander of the 5th District in a photo on Page 11 of The Minnesota Legionnaire. He handed two \$1,000 checks to Commander Jennifer Havlick on behalf of St. Paul Post 8 for her project: Project Delta and Tunnels to Towers.

People and posts wishing to donate to the commander's project do not need to write two checks to those organizations. They can write a single check to "Minnesota American Legion Foundation," and in the memo, write "Fund 82." This helps staff track donations and her efforts to reach a goal of \$60,000 and helps the commander, at the end, make a one large donation to the intended recipient.



Always the week of March 15

# Taps



Continued from Page 5

<b>Pelofske, Donald E.</b>	84	12/30/21	Army NG	Vietnam	18	Hackensack Post 202
Note: He served in the Minnesota National Guard for 27 years.						
<b>Pesek, Wesley D.</b>	80	11/20/22	Army	Vietnam	33	Greenbush Post 88
<b>Reynolds, Ronald G.</b>	80	12/14/22	Army	Vietnam	41	Worthington Post 5
<b>Richardson, A. Michael Jr.</b>	87	8/3/22	Air Force	Korea	33	North Mankato Post 518
<b>Rockwell, Howard W.</b>	91	11/13/22	Army	Korea	65	Winona Post 9
Note: He was a Purple Heart recipient.						
<b>Roesler, Richard J.</b>	87	10/13/22	Navy	Korea/VN	37	Mora Post 201
Note: He was a past post commander.						
<b>Rolfing, Bernard A.</b>	85	11/8/22	Army	Vietnam	15	Winona Post 9
<b>Rosenberg, Bruce L.</b>	76	11/26/22	Army	Vietnam	15	Ellsworth Post 196
<b>Sande, James A.</b>	86	11/27/22	Army	Vietnam	33	Faribault Post 43
<b>Schaefer, Rocky K.</b>	67	12/11/22	Navy	Vietnam	2	Keewatin Post 452
<b>Scheffler, Wilbert C.</b>	92	9/16/22	Army	Korea	45	Barnesville Post 153
<b>Schmidt, Claude F.</b>	94	10/26/22	Army	Korea	70	Pequot Lakes Post 49
<b>Schmidt, Robert A.</b>	82	11/28/22	Army	Vietnam	24	Willmar Post 167
<b>Schultz, Henry M.</b>	88	11/29/22	Army	Korea	39	Marietta Post 156
<b>Schwartz, David R.</b>	82	11/6/22	Navy	Vietnam	33	Springfield Post 257
<b>Sellers, Jerome</b>	71	10/22/22	Army	Vietnam	6	Northfield Post 84
Note: He was part of his post's honor guard and would send in deceased members to the Legionnaire editor right after funerals, usually by email but a few times by telephone.						
<b>Severtson, John F.</b>	74	12/15/22	Marines	Vietnam	29	Albert Lea Post 56
Note: He deployed to Vietnam. He founded the local chapter of Beyond the Yellow Ribbon. He served two terms on the Albert Lea City Council and was a past post commander.						
<b>Shafer, David J.</b>	81	9/26/22	Air Force	Vietnam	8	Faribault Post 43
<b>Simon, Theodore J.</b>	90	11/15/22	Army	Korea	51	New Prague Post 45
<b>Snyder, William J.</b>	91	11/2/22	Army	Korea	38	Hutchinson Post 96
<b>Spaeth, Alois L.</b>	92	11/17/22	Army	Korea	29	New Ulm Post 132
<b>Stein, Albert T.</b>	90	11/29/22	Army	Korea	35	Waite Park Post 428
Note: He served in Korea and worked at the St. Cloud VA hospital for 31 years.						
<b>Sturm, Vincent B.</b>	98	11/29/22	Army AF	WWII	39	Waite Park Post 428
Note: He flew 45 missions over Germany as a turret gunman in an A-20 Havoc.						
<b>Supper, Joseph J.</b>	76	11/15/22	Army	Vietnam	12	Clarissa Post 213
<b>Thompson, Jack L.</b>	82	11/21/22	Navy	Vietnam	14	Aitkin Post 86
<b>Thompson, Jack L.</b>	82	11/21/22	Navy	Vietnam	14	Aitkin Post 86
<b>Veiman, Gerald H.</b>	91	10/25/22	Army	Korea	56	Elk River Post 112
<b>von Holdt, Dayle J.</b>	91	11/24/22	Army	Korea	69	Round Lake Post 461
<b>Vossen, Donald L.</b>	82	11/24/22	Navy	Vietnam	11	Willmar Post 167
<b>Weber, Alphonse</b>	89	12/19/22	Army	Korea	34	Little Falls Post 46
<b>Wells, Gerald N.</b>	78	10/3/22	Army	Vietnam	27	Elk River Post 112
<b>Willaby, Dennis W.</b>	85	9/23/22	Army	Vietnam	36	Faribault Post 43
<b>Wojciak, John A.</b>	79	12/13/21	Air Force	Vietnam	27	Hillman Post 602
<b>Yliniemi, Elmer J.</b>	96	12/19/22	Army	Korea	47	Park Rapids Post 212
<b>Zellner, Robert J.</b>	95	11/5/22	Army	Korea	46	Cambridge Post 290

## Undersecretary clears up myths on PACT Act

Continued from Page 1

"There are many, many more doors to get into the VA," he said. "The point is to get your questions answered."

Elnahal visited Minneapolis after spending time in Montana with Sen. Jon Tester, chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. He returned to Washington, D.C., after his time in the Gopher State.

The screenings cover many kinds of well-known toxic exposures:

- Open burn pits.
- Airborne hazards.
- Agent Orange.
- Gulf War exposures.
- Radiations.
- Camp Lejeune contaminated water.
- Other exposures.

Elnahal said there are myths he wishes to clear up.

One is that veterans could end up having their benefit percentage downgraded. He said the opposite is true. He said 97 percent go up or stay the same.

Another is Camp Lejeune exposure, he said. Rather than believe TV ads telling them they must join a class-action suit to receive care, veterans can apply for and receive VA care and benefits.

The PACT Act, he noted,

created a one-year special enrollment period for post-9/11 combat veterans, even if they fall outside of a new 10-year post-discharge window. There are nine months left.

The VA has authorization to elevate terminal cases, he said.

The VA has formed a burn pit registry and intends to interview 100 percent of the veterans on the registry.

He said the Minneapolis VA serves 105,000 veterans, and the PACT Act will expand that base. He said Minneapolis has trained toxic health specialists for assisting staff with evaluations.

"This is an opportunity for you to see whether you can qualify for benefits," Elnahal told a room of veterans at the VA Medical Center Auditorium.

Elnahal said the federal government will need to learn from exposing its military servicemembers to toxic conditions. He said VA leadership regularly meets with the Department of Defense, and he hopes future deployments will reduce the chemical impact they have on troops.

To get the screening, visit the nearest VA medical center, or call 800-myVA411 (then press 8), or go to myhealth.va.gov, or, in Minnesota, contact the county veteran service officer.

## QR codes for presumptives

Use the photo app on a smartphone to bring up links



Agent Orange



Open burn pits and airborne hazards



Gulf War exposures



Other Gulf War exposures (infectious diseases)



Camp Lejeune



Radiation

## QR codes for general info



Toxic Exposure Screen Information



VA Mobile Exposure Education App

## Why is the Legion's retention rate an issue?

## Reduce the state tax on charitable gambling

### Membership Moment

Linda Dvorak



I want to thank each of you for all you have been doing with membership. We made it past the 75 percent target with flying colors. Our next target date is Jan. 19, and we need to be at 80 percent.

I was recently at National American Legion College, and we had a couple of classes on membership. The retention in The American Legion is an issue. Why? Why aren't people renewing their membership?

Answer: They don't see the value — not necessarily the monetary value, but the "why should I renew?" value. As of Dec. 14, the renewal rate for The American Legion, as a whole sits at 72.24 percent. In Minnesota, we are at 77.75 percent.

The overall membership percentage for The American Legion, as a whole, is at 72.36 percent. In Minnesota, we are at 77.17 percent. National Commander Vincent Troiola has a membership goal of 103 percent and a renewal rate goal of 93 percent.

What are you doing when you get a new member into your post? Are you welcoming them? Do you send some type of new member kit? Do they know anything about The American Legion?

One last thing we talked about is our "why."

Why did we join and what keeps us coming back?

Maybe ask members of your post this question. Ask a few of the newer or younger members as well as those seasoned members. You just may be surprised at what you find out.

I pulled a report on our "undeliverable" addresses in Minnesota, and we currently have 780 members that have undeliverable addresses. Of that number, 421 have already paid for 2023, 307 last paid in 2022 and 52 last paid in 2021. All these members are not getting renewal notices, and they don't get the Legionnaire newspaper and the Legion Magazine.

Let's work to get those addresses updated so these people are hearing from us. If you need help getting the addresses updated, please contact your district commander or membership director.

Linda Dvorak of New Prague Post 45 is the membership director for the Department of Minnesota.

### National Report

Bill Barbknecht



Happy New Year to all! Congratulations to Linda Dvorak and Marissa LaCourt for attending Legion College in Indianapolis Dec. 10-16. Thank you, veterans. Thanks to Kelley Adelsman, too. She is an instructor at National American Legion College.

Jan. 1: Legacy Scholarships applications opens.

Jan. 11: Every post should be at least 80 percent of membership.

January and February will be mid-winter conferences every weekend. Donna & I look forward to attending as many as possible.

Congratulations to Ray Kane as our new department service officer. He is from Cottage Grove. Good luck in your new position.

Feb. 5 is Four Chaplains Sunday. Let your church know about it. Honor your veterans for the sacrifices they all made.

As of today, the Washington Conference is Feb. 26-March 1. All Legionnaires are welcome to attend.

We ask every post to do Buddy Checks the week of March 15, the week of The American Legion's birthday. If you have not seen them in a while, go visit. You may be able to prevent a bad thing from happening. Veterans enjoy a face-to-face visit.

Let them know you care about them.

The state of Minnesota has an \$18 billion surplus. It is time to lower the taxes on charitable gambling.

In our post home, all the dollars raised are given back to veterans programs and local community efforts. More could be given if it wasn't for the outrageous taxes. Please contact your local representatives and senators as well as the governor.

Make plans for your Oratorical Contest in your district and onto state competition.

Have you ever checked out your auto insurance with USAA? You might be able to save a lot of dollars. Also, Legionnaire Insurance Trust (thelit.com) has many good programs for your family. Long-term, dental and medical, as well as others.

Watch for black ice this winter. We need you alive.

If I can be of any help, as always, please call me at 218-770-6264.

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

# The SAL Update:

## Thanks for all the good work you do

Greetings and SALutations!  
First off, I hope that everyone had a great holiday season with family, friends and good times.

It is hard to believe that we are already in 2023. The turning of the calendar means that we are almost halfway through the current membership year, and I am so proud and grateful for all the hard work that each and everyone of you are doing for the American Legion Family.

Mid-winter conferences are coming up, and this is a great time to reconnect with everyone as these usually mark the halfway point in the year.

### Detachment commander

**Tim Weaver**



My project this year is the American Legion Veterans & Children's Fund, and I have set a goal of \$12,500 for this vital endeavor. Please consider donating, and, yes, gambling revenue can be used as the SAL Commander's Project.

Make the check to "Minnesota American Legion Foundation" and put "Fund 99" in the memo.

As always, please keep our

service personnel and their families in your thoughts and prayers.

*Tim Weaver of La Crescent Squadron 595 is the commander of the Detachment of Minnesota for the Sons of The American Legion.*



**DETACHMENT OF MINNESOTA**  
2023 MEMBERSHIP TOTALS  
Report Date: 12/18/2022

2022 Results as of 7/31/2022	11158		
Current Received as of 12/18/2022	6354	53.18%	*Includes traditional and online renewals
2023 Detachment Goal	11947	11378	55.84% set from national

Vice Commanders	2022 Results	2023 Goal	Current at Dept.	Percentage	Placing
1st and 3rd	3732	4008	2282	56.94%	2
2nd and 7th	2120	2186	1206	55.17%	3
4th and 5th	712	762	454	59.58%	1
6th and 9th	2528	2708	1308	48.30%	5
8th and 10th	2064	2210	1103	49.91%	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11156</b>	<b>11874</b>	<b>6353</b>	<b>53.50%</b>	

\*The above goals are set by the District Leadership

Districts	2022 Results	2023 Goal	Current at Dept.	Percentage	Placing
1st District	1676	1807	983	54.40%	6
2nd District	1216	1241	779	62.77%	2
3rd District	2056	2201	1299	59.02%	3
4th District	364	390	213	54.62%	5
5th District	348	372	241	64.78%	1
6th District	1601	1715	827	48.22%	8
7th District	904	945	427	45.19%	10
8th District	475	509	299	58.74%	4
9th District	927	993	481	48.44%	7
10th District	1589	1701	804	47.27%	9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11156</b>	<b>11874</b>	<b>6353</b>	<b>53.50%</b>	

\*The above goals are set by the District Leadership

1982 MN SAL AT-LARGE

2023 Original Goal	Percentage	Ranking
3996	57.11%	2
2273	53.07%	3
761	59.62%	1
2707	48.31%	5
2209	49.92%	4

\*The above goal set by the Detachment Membership Director

2023 Original Goal	Percentage	Ranking
1795	54.76%	5
1302	59.82%	2
2201	59.02%	3
390	54.64%	6
372	64.85%	1
1715	48.23%	8
970	44.01%	10
509	58.77%	4
993	48.45%	7
1701	47.27%	9

\*The above goal set by the Detachment Membership Director

## Therefore, be it resolved ...

Happy New Year to all of you!

It's hard to believe that we are already in a new year. I, for one, am very much looking forward to what 2023 has in store for us as a detachment.

Within The American Legion, the term "resolution" is part of our normal vocabulary. Additionally, it is customary for some people to use the holiday season as a time for personal resolutions to be created and filled with what we want to accomplish for the upcoming year.

If you're stumped, here are some ideas: First, "Be the One." You have no idea what a simple buddy check can do not only for our veterans but their families as well.

It's not about membership; it's very much deeper than that. It's what we should be doing to watch over those in need. There is a 24/7 confidential

### Membership Director

**Matthew Verkuilen**



suicide crisis support line by simply dialing 988, followed by pressing 1.

Let's all "Be the One."

Secondly, consider what the future looks like for your post, your unit and even your squadron or American Legion Riders chapter.

If you are missing one of these, you're missing a part of your Legion Family that are there to support your programs, to support our veterans and their families.

We have plenty of room for more new squadrons, and application materials can be found on our website at mnsal.org.

If your Legion Family is complete, perhaps take a look at how your already important work can

be shaped to include or interest more people.

Third, and finally, consider being involved in your squadron, your district, or even the detachment level. We all know that many hands make light work, and our organization is no different.

There is room for everyone. Come join us! Happy holidays and best wishes for what 2023 has in store for you.

*Matthew Verkuilen is the membership director for the Detachment of Minnesota for the Sons of The American Legion.*

**Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Minnesota Commander Tim Weaver of La Crescent Post 575 speaks to Minnesota American Legion members at the Fall Conference on Oct. 29 at the Kelly Inn in St. Cloud.**



# What's happening?

## National vice commander is coming

OSSEO — The Minnesota American Legion Family Sweetheart Rally takes place Feb. 4 at Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172.

American Legion National Vice Commander Glenn Wahus is the featured speaker.

Wahus is a Navy veteran and member of Watford City, N.D., Post 29. He is self-employed and serves on legislative panels for the North Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. He was North Dakota American Legion commander in 2018-19. He is a past district and post commander, too, and has chaired VA&R committees over his 32 years of membership.

Membership turn-in and social hour is 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Lunch is at 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and the program is after the meal.

Participants can pay in advance or at the door. To pay in advance, checks for \$15 must be received by Wednesday, Jan. 28. Make checks payable to "ALA Department of Minnesota."

To pay at the door, bring \$15 in cash or a check.

The meal is sloppy-joes, coleslaw, chips and dessert.

Participants are encouraged to bring members who have never been to a department event before.

On the horizon is the Appreciation Rally at New Prague Post 45 on April 15.

Other upcoming events on the Legion calendar are the National Commander's Tour of Minnesota April 16-21, which will be in northern Minnesota this time, and Minnesota Legion College April 20-23.

The Department Convention is slated for July 12-15 in Redwood Falls, and the Department Fall Conference is set for Oct. 26-28 in St. Cloud.

## District Mid-Winter Conferences are planned

ST. PAUL — Here is a list of the times, dates and places of the Mid-Winter Conferences planned for each district in Minnesota:

- 1st District: Jan. 7, Owatonna Post 77
- 2nd District: Feb. 17-18, Blue Earth Post 89
- 3rd District: 7:30 a.m. Jan. 21, Lonsdale Post 586
- 4th & 5th districts: 9 a.m. Jan. 7, North St. Paul Post 39
- 6th District: Feb. 11, Ironton Post 443
- 7th District: Jan. 28, Granite Falls Post 69
- 8th District: Feb. 18, Zoom
- 9th District: 10 a.m. Jan. 14, Bagley Post 16
- 10th District: 9 a.m. Jan. 14, Anoka Post 102

## Registration is open for bowling

DAYTON — The 2023 Minnesota State American Legion Family Bowling Tournament is planned for March 18 to April 22 at Sundance Lanes, 15240 113th Ave. N., Dayton. It is hosted by Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172.



**Glenn Wahus**

Singles and Doubles happen at noon Saturdays. Team action takes place at 3:30 p.m. Saturdays and noon Sundays.

Cari Lamb is the tournament secretary. She can be contacted at 612-968-4839 or crlmb74@gmail.com. Her mailing address is 3217 19th St. S., Minneapolis, MN 55407. Visit mnlegion.org and hover over "events" to find the downloadable registration form and hotel information.

## Patriot Fish Fest comes to Devils Lake

DEVILS LAKE, N.D. — Patriot Fish Fest 2023 takes place Jan. 6 and 7 at Woodland Resort.

The resort is at 1012 Woodland Drive in Devils Lake.

The opening ceremony is at 5 p.m. Jan. 6. Social time begins at 7 p.m. Check-in on Jan. 7 begins at 6:30 a.m., with the fishing contest running from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

A banquet takes place at 5 p.m., with a 7 p.m. fireworks and social time.

## Commander's Project

Let's do this!

Department Commander Jennifer Havlick's Project raises funds for Minnesota families receiving mortgage-free smarthomes from Tunnel to Towers Foundation.

She also hopes to raise funds for Project Delta, which creates service dogs for veterans from rescue/shelter dogs, and for Eagle's Healing Nest, which helps veterans with the invisible wounds of war.

Mail to American Legion Dept. of Minnesota, 20 W. 12th St. Room 300A, St. Paul, MN 55155-2000

Goal: \$60,000

Present: 41% at \$24,765

(Gambling funds are allowed.)

Make checks out to: **Minnesota American Legion Foundation Fund 82.**

The event is open to the public.

Register at americanheroes-southdoors.com. Email info@americanheroesouthdoors.com for further details.

## Vets Day on Hill in March

ST. PAUL — Save the date. Veterans Day on the Hill 2023 will be March 30.

The DAV of Minnesota will provide a free lunch at 11 a.m. at the St. Paul Armory, 600 Cedar St.

Doors open at 10 a.m.

The Veterans March is at 12:40 p.m. from the Armory to the Veterans Service Building, followed by a rally at the Capitol Rotunda at 1 p.m.

Topics include passing a veterans omnibus bill, property tax relief for surviving spouses, fixing the post-9/11 service bonus.

## Display coming to Slayton

SLAYTON — The Slayton American Legion Post 64 Family has booked the American Veterans Traveling Tribute.

The post will host the traveling Vietnam Wall From Aug. 15 to 20. The display also comes with 72 displays showing the cost of freedom starting with World War I.

The post seeks volunteers to aid with setup on Aug. 15, a Tuesday.

The display is happening at the same time as the Murray County Fair.

Post Commander Brad Pagel said more details will come once they are known.



Daniel Crawford of Brooklyn Center Post 630 shows his 23rd Veteran Recon Alumni display. It has three chips to remind him to be grateful three times a day.

## 'I wasn't living. I wasn't dying. I was in this limbo state'

Continued from Page 1

the USS Iwo Jima amphibious assault ship on a six-month Mediterranean Sea cruise in 1989-90, for the Persian Gulf War on the USS Guam cruiser in 1990-91 and a second time with the Iwo Jima in 1991-92.

During the Gulf War, Crawford was part of a military evacuation of the U.S. embassy in the Somali capital of Mogadishu.

The January 1991 emergency mission was called Operation Eastern Exit. It happened because of rising violence in December 1990, with militants surrounding the embassy after the collapse of the Somalia government. U.S. Central Command opted to send 60 Marines on two CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters from the USS Guam to secure the embassy.

Four waves of five CH-46 Sea Knight choppers brought the U.S. personnel and families, including children, to the Guam, which brought them to Muscat, Oman. Later, they were flown to Germany, then to home.

Right after the war, Crawford married Anne Burch from Ham Lake.

In 1993, Crawford was promoted to sergeant and sent to HMX-1. That's jargon for Marines Helicopter Squadron One, the Marines who transport the president, vice president, heads of state and other dignitaries around by helicopter. The mission is best known by the call sign "Marine One."

Here, too, Crawford worked in logistics.

Seems like a fairly successful military career so far, huh?

Well, it wasn't all rainbows and unicorns.

Two weeks prior to Crawford arriving at boot camp in San Diego, a Marine had been killed from brain trauma. At the end of boot camps, instructors would arrange informal boxing matches. The instructors had not checked the medical records for Pvt. Paul Resce Jr., which would have revealed prior head injuries. Nor did they consider that he was nearsighted and probably shouldn't compete with so great of a disadvantage.

Crawford was 123 pounds going into boot camp. He realized one drill instructor took a special interest in him. The man would take him aside and smoke him. (Smoking means punishment by extra amounts of exercise.) He would remind Crawford of what happened to Pvt. Resce. Between the

words and the smoking, Crawford knew this instructor wanted to have control over him.

One day, Crawford was cleaning the instructor's office, which had a head and a rack for one. He was cleaning the shower stall when the instructor came in with nothing but a towel. He could tell the instructor wanted oral pleasure. Crawford played naïve and managed to refuse without provoking his ire. The instructor turned his attention on another recruit.

At the time, he was glad he no longer attracted the instructor's attention, but with time, he felt guilty he didn't stop the man from preying on the other recruit.

At 29 Palms, a fellow Marine died when the antenna on a PRC-77 radio hit a live power line, electrocuting him.

Crawford said there was no closure, no thoughtfulness, nothing.

"All we did was say, 'OK, somebody's gone.'"

In October 1989, while at the start of the first Iwo Jima deployment and just 80 miles southeast of Norfolk Naval Station in the Atlantic Ocean, Crawford was in his rack when he heard a loud bang over his head. Everyone wondered what was going on. The emergency response team went

to the bridge.

Phalanx CIWS 20 mm projectiles from the USS El Paso, an amphibious cargo ship, struck the Iwo Jima. They killed navigator Lt. Cmdr. Timothy Kirtley and wounded Petty Officer 1st Class David Rawls. Both were standing on the bridge when struck.

The Phalanx rapid-fire gun automatically tracked and shot down a target drone in a live-fire exercise, but it then kept tracking and firing as the drone fell to the sea, and the gun mistakenly fired at the Iwo Jima's starboard bridge wing and flight deck.

On the same cruise, in November 1989, two pilots, Michael Vidusek and Todd Travis, flew an AH-1T Cobra helicopter away from the Iwo Jima. Off the coast of Spain, it crashed, and the pilots died.

Crawford said not much was found. After both fatal incidents, everyone kept moving, ignoring the loss of life. There was no process.

"This is what messes us up," he said.

1989 was a year full of fatal naval mishaps, and, that November, in an unprecedented move, the entire Navy stood down for two days to conduct a full review of safety and carelessness.

On his second Iwo Jima cruise, on Oct. 4, 1992, while in the Aegean Sea, Crawford witnessed a crewman on the flight deck

walk into the tail rotor of a Cobra helicopter. It happened one hour after the captain had given a speech to the crew about the dangers of complacency.

Crawford was not aboard the Iwo Jima when its deadliest incident occurred. That happened in October 1990. Ten sailors were killed when a steam valve ruptured during exercises in the Arabian Sea.

Naval deployments, especially then, were more dangerous than members of the public may imagine today.

In 1993, Crawford came to Quantico Marine Base in northern Virginia. He had Top Secret and Yankee White security clearances. Getting a Yankee White takes a year because of its extensive background investigation.

"At that point, I thought going to HMX-1 would have been safe," he said.

After all, Marine One is the only non-fail mission of the Marines. These are the cream of the crop, and Crawford worked in quality assurance.

But on May 19 of that year, four Marines died in a crash during an inspection flight of one of the VH-60N Black Hawk helicopters in the fleet. The crash was 10 miles east of Quantico.

Crawford filled out documentation for the military flight investigators.

"I gave them the paperwork for the aircraft and kept on going," he said.

The TV show "Unsolved Mysteries" in 1997 even did an episode on it. That's because the military blamed improperly installed roll pins, but the workers who built the chopper told the show it could not have flown in the first place with improperly installed roll pins. Also, a flight specialist concluded the true cause was flying into an area where the Army supposedly tested at-the-time-secretive microwave weapons.

Today, microwave weapons are no secret, but the case was closed decades ago.

Things weren't peaches and cream before the military. A lot of people join the military to escape troubles at home, and Crawford was no different.

His parents divorced as a young child. His mother had an alcohol addiction. She remarried, giving young Daniel an alcoholic stepfather, too. Together, they often left him alone and, at times, abused. He said he also suffered sexual abuse as a child, but not from parents.

His actual father was not an alcoholic and, without custody, had moved away to Washington state. By eighth grade, Daniel pretty much was living alone, and that's why he returned to Circle Pines. He would live with his grandmother.

"I'm not blaming the military for troubles in my life," Crawford said.

"Joining was me escaping real life by going into the military life."

He got out of the Marines in December 1995 and returned to the Cities. He worked for family and friends, then got a job as a consultant as a systems administrator for a computer consulting firm. He excelled but was soon fired for "too much personality."

Crawford said he was just a typical veteran among civilians. He began hitting the booze and struggling to figure out who he was in the civilian world.

"I've got all these computer skills, and I can't land on my feet," he said.

Finally, he got a job in St. Louis as a systems administrator. He and Anne became parents. Their son, Joshua, was born in July 1997. (Today, Joshua is active-duty Air Force.)

By October, Crawford was in detox for alcohol. That failed. Then he went through chemical abuse treatment. Failed. He was prescribed an anti-depressant. More failure.

"I ended up leaving my wife and son, so I wouldn't hurt them."

Tears came to Crawford as he told the story.

"And I am sorry that I left them. Regardless of the problems we had, they didn't deserve that."

With a computer and \$409, he purchased a Greyhound Ameripass and went all over the United States. His wife and son moved back to Minnesota.

"I searched out to find myself, and I didn't do so well," Crawford said.

The bus, after a month, brought him to Minneapolis, and eventually he found himself at Metro Hope Ministries. He credits its Christian-based, eight-month drug and alcohol recovery program for keeping him above ground.

"They are responsible, in my brain, for keeping my spiritually alive during that period," he said. "It would have been easy for me to eat a bullet, but with that spiritual part, it kept the hope going."

He said he also is grateful to his mother-in-law, Donna Burch, who continually prayed for him.

He tried to rekindle his marriage. However, he drank through the recovery program. He didn't like sobriety.

"I wasn't living. I wasn't dying. I was in this limbo state," Crawford said. "People are still walking on eggshells around me."

He got a job doing computer consulting, and he would bill clients at a rate of \$250 per hour. Not bad. He lived in Minneapolis with roommates and would fly to places like California and return home. He was high-functioning but miserable and drinking and not being much of a husband. Crawford went through the divorce.

One day in 2000, while at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, Crawford talked to a lady who also was headed to California. Months later, at the San Jose airport, she ran into him, and they exchanged numbers.

Amanda Burkart and Daniel Crawford became Amanda and Daniel Crawford in 2001, and they honeymooned in Florida. In fact, they were on the honeymoon when the 9/11 attacks happened.

They are still together today. "We've had a marriage based on faith in each other, not love from me, because I didn't know what that was from me. I was looking for it," he said.

Amanda and Daniel had children: Abbie in 2005 and Amelia in 2006. Daniel still had a drinking problem but would stay sober to care for and to drive them. In 2008, son Patrick was born a premature baby.

Born four months early, he was 1.5 pounds. He spent 108 days at the neonatal intensive care unit at Children's Hospital in Minneapolis, and came

Continued on Page 9



This photo shows Daniel Crawford shaking President Bill Clinton's hand. This is when he was a sergeant with Marine One, the call sign for the helicopter that transports the president. The unit that runs it is called HMX-1, for Marine Helicopter Squadron One.

# Darn, I have to pay that big ambulance bill

By Stacey Harrold  
Apple Valley Post 1776

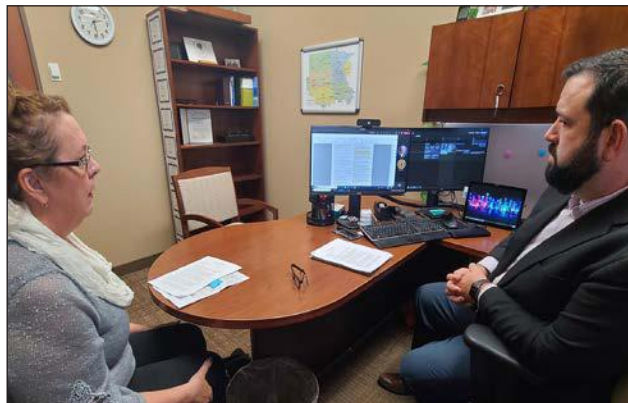
I was asked to tell my story about my VA medical experience that occurred about almost four years ago.

During that time, I was informed that so many in the same situation as I was in received the same alarming news about ambulance charges and who is responsible for paying those in the end.

I made several phone calls to sort out the confusion only to find that there was no way around it, and I would have to pay this bill myself unexpectedly. They considered an ambulance ride to the hospital "transportation" and not medical need, so I did not qualify for the transportation coverage when this occurred. My VA disability needed to be 30 percent or more to qualify to have it paid for.

My story begins, as I had just had a full hip replacement surgery at the Minneapolis VA hospital. I was only home a day or two when I thought I was experiencing a heart attack.

It was about 11:30 one evening in late January 2019 and well after being able to reach the VA to ask questions about where an ambulance should



**Stacey Harrold of Apple Valley Post 1776 joined American Legion Department of Minnesota staff in a meeting Oct. 12 at the VA Midwest Health Care Network offices in Eagan. Others attended via an online video conference. With her here is VISN-23 Chief Business Officer Andrew Frost. The discussion was about the VA failing to pay for the entire episode of care like it once had for veterans rated at 30 percent or lower. The Minnesota American Legion worked with U.S. senators and representatives to send a letter to VA Secretary Denis McDonough.**

take me or what is financially covered. I was in a lot of pain and scared. I could barely walk, yet knew I needed help.

I don't have other health insurance so I naturally thought that I needed to go to the VA Hospital for care.

Once there, many tests were performed to find out what was going on. It did take some time and a few days later we did find out that the test results showed that I had a gall bladder attack

and not a heart attack.

While at the hospital and still immobile and in pain from hip surgery, I tried to find out where to send the ambulance bill and to notify the correct parties of what happened and where I was.

I soon found out that the ambulance bill needed to stay in my purse, as I was fully responsible for this cost!

I immediately thought this must be wrong, as I am fully covered by the VA for my

medical expenses. After several calls and reading up on this topic, I accepted the fact that I had to pay this \$2,900 bill.

I am telling you this because the American Legion of Minnesota is behind new legislation to help change this for all veterans nationally!

Like many of us, I got the email last fall explaining this and that Minnesota actually has bipartisan support as well, for moving this issue forward to Congress and to the VA secretary.

I was so excited, I replied back immediately and asked what I could do to help. Awareness is important!

How to handle all of the VA charges and procedures can be confusing to understand. I thought by telling my story, we could all help pass on the "good news" to others, so they can be better prepared for an unexpected medical event!

Please see (VA Mission Act 38 CFR 17.4005-17.4030 & Fact Sheet Centralized Community Emergency Treatment Reporting and Care Coordination) for more detailed information to ensure your VA medical experience goes as smoothly as possible.

Thank you so much for reading my story!

By Amy Larsen  
Media & Communications Committee

## Scenes from the Pearl Harbor Rally



**Daniel Crawford points to his biceps. Working out three times a week has been good for his mental and physical health and helped him kick a lifetime liquor habit.**

Continued from Page 8

home at 5 pounds in April 2009.

In May 2009, Daniel's mother died from alcoholism, giving him a clear picture of the grip alcohol can have on people.

He said he has been a good father but still lacked a sense of purpose and that feeling of camaraderie he had in the military. He isolated himself a lot.

By 2019, he had seen 50 states and still hadn't found himself. He couldn't hold a job, and he was living in Brooklyn Center. He still had an alcohol problem. He was a Brooklyn Center Post 260 member by this point, but he didn't realize the Legion, or the VFW, for that matter, had purposes besides bars.

He worked for the Census Bureau doing recruitment, door knocking and various odd jobs.

That December, he worked at a Census Bureau table during the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) Home for the Holidays event at Target Field.

"This was the first exposure to the veterans community," he said.

That invigorated him with his Census job, and he made extra efforts to find veterans living in shelters or under bridges, to make sure they were counted.

On Facebook, he noticed MACV posted about 23rd Veteran, and its recon program. "Recon" stands for "reconditioning." It is a 14-week peer-to-peer wellness adventure. He saw more about it later and decided to take a chance. He set a goal of remaining sober.

It wasn't a substance abuse program, but being with other veterans worked. He stayed sober.

"If they had known how much I was into substance abuse at the time, they probably would not have accepted me," Crawford said. "Now, I am their star graduate."

The adventure starts out with a weeklong outdoor event, and in Crawford's case, in April 2022, seven strangers were on a 30-foot boat off the coast of

Florida. They got to know each other well and bonded. When they returned to the Twin Cities, they met three times a week while working out together at CrossFit Nordeast. He has a "playbook" that explains how to tap into brain chemicals for positivity, like how exercise leads to higher levels of dopamine.

"It's given me the sense of purpose and camaraderie to deal with my problems in a safe manner," he said. "I can be genuine — vulnerable."

The 23rd Veteran program is known for its "Nearly Naked" ruck march fundraisers that also are food-raisers for veteran housing. The program exists in Duluth and the Twin Cities, and the 23rd Veteran team expanded the program to Philadelphia in November. Crawford got to share his story at a ruck march kickoff in Valley Forge.

He thanked everyone who nudged him in the right direction.

The American Legion Department of Minnesota and 23rd Veteran had tables next to each other at MACV Home for the Holidays at Target Field last month. Also, Delano Post 377 donated to 23rd Veteran after one of its members went through the recon. And a ruck march might be coming to Delano in 2023.

Crawford has a clearer vision of The American Legion and the work it does for veterans, from legislative efforts to fundraising to being the largest veterans network in the world. That network is important for keeping veterans tuned in to the veterans community.

Now Crawford is a recon coordinator for 23rd Veteran, and he will be leading the next group. Part of the program is remembering to be grateful at least three times a day.

He is grateful for Amanda. "She said this has been an amazing chase for you in many ways," he said. "When you put your mind to something you are passionate about, you are unstoppable."



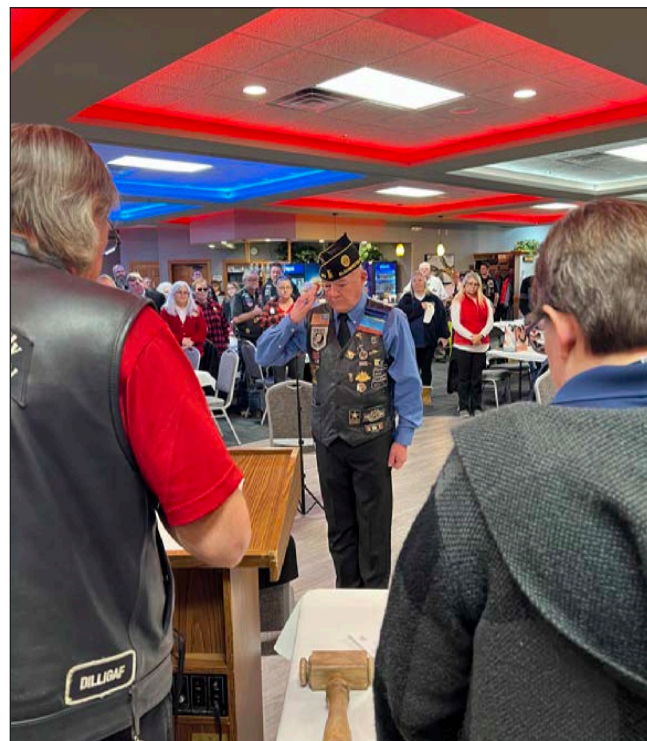
**Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary President Mary Kuperus laughs as Minnesota American Legion NECman Bill Barbknecht makes a funny comment.**



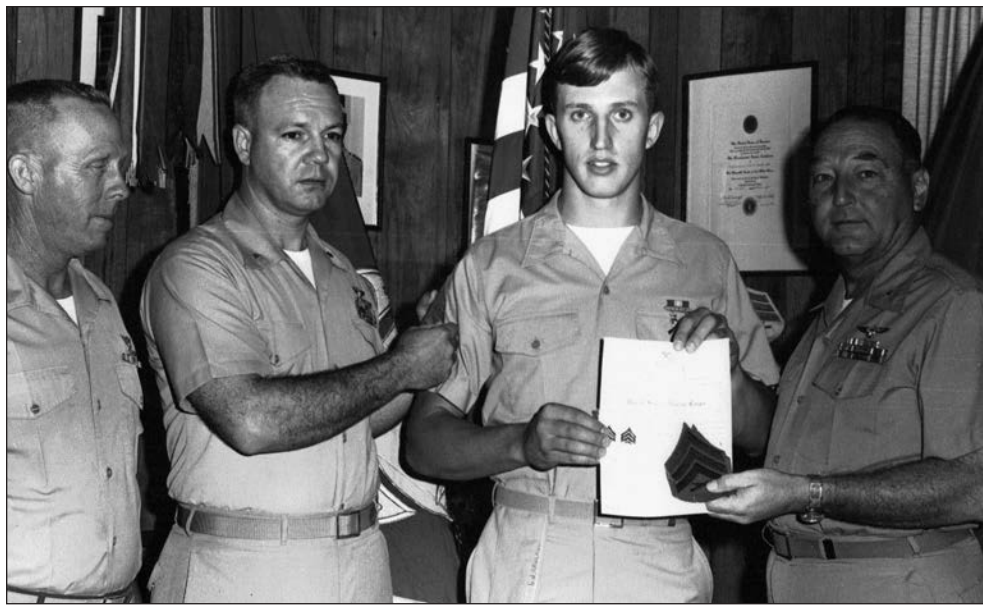
**Garylee and Zandra Davenport, right, chat as they wait for their table to have its turn in line for food.**



**Members of the Legion, Auxiliary, Sons and Riders stand for the colors during opening ceremony. The Pearl Harbor Rally was held at Spicer Post 545 on Dec. 3.**



**Paul Hassing of the American Legion Riders salutes the POW/MIA flag during the opening ceremony.**



Marine Charles Anderson in 1973, when he was promoted to sergeant.

# A faithful life to God and country

Charles Anderson of southern Minnesota was 53 when the Marine Corps sent him to Afghanistan

By Gary Kass

FLORENCE — Charles J. Anderson was born on Feb. 1, 1951, in Tyler, just a few miles from his family's farm. Anderson grew up a typical farm kid.

"Like most farm kids of that time, even the children had to help with the many chores and duties on the farm," he said.

Anderson attended school in Balaton where he played football and ran track. Unsure what to do after graduation, he decided to join the Marine Corps and left for basic training in August 1969, three months after graduation.

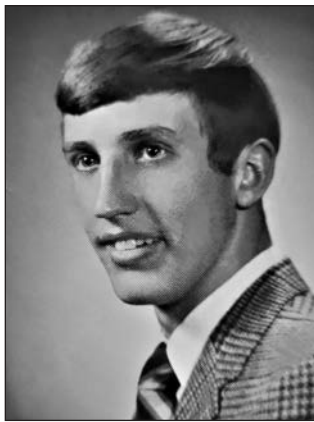
After basic training in San Diego, Anderson was trained to maintain airborne fire control radar on the F-4J Phantom fighter-bomber. He expected to go to Vietnam but instead was assigned to Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii.

"It was in the Marine Corps where I found faith in Christ and started to walk with the Lord, and became discipled," he said.

Anderson excelled in the Marines and was promoted to sergeant. In 1973, Anderson finished his enlistment.

Anderson used his G.I. Bill for college at Mankato State University, followed by divinity studies at Bethel Theological Seminary in Arden Hills. Soon after, Anderson met and married the love of his life, Judy, well-educated young Christian from St. Paul who had already served in a ministry in Indonesia. He earned his Master of Divinity from Bethel in 1983, and was ordained with the Christian Missionary Alliance Church in 1985. He then received church endorsement to the Navy Chaplain Corps.

Anderson completed Navy Chaplain Basic Course in the summer of 1985. He and



Charles Anderson graduated from Balaton High School in 1969



Charles Anderson as a Marine recruit



Lt. Cmdr. Charles Anderson

his wife, Judy, moved to San Diego, and Anderson quickly

departed for the Indian Ocean to join his ship, USS Fox (CG33), a guided missile cruiser. Anderson returned with his ship to San Diego in time for his son, Benjamin, to be born.

In 1987 Anderson deployed again on Fox to the Persian Gulf to relieve another ship, USS Stark (FFG31), which had been badly damaged by an Iraqi missile attack. In the attack, 37 sailors were killed and 21 were injured.

"We transited the Strait of Hormuz under general quarters, because we didn't know who might try to shoot at us. We pretty much spent the summer in the Gulf. Oh, what a hot place!"

At the end of the deployment, the USS Fox returned to San Diego.

Anderson was next assigned to Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, where he provided spiritual guidance to Marine recruits, drill instructors and other military staff. His assignment to the Recruit Depot was notable in that his second child, Nathan, was born there in 1988.

His next assignment was also in San Diego, as chaplain of Destroyer Squadron 13. It was there that Anderson was promoted to lieutenant commander.

In 1993, Anderson was assigned as the first chaplain to Strategic Communications Wing One (TAKE Charge and Move Out, TACAMO) at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla. The mission of this organization is to ensure operational command and control of the nation's nuclear forces if a threat should arise. A large TACAMO military aircraft is airborne 24/7/365 with the capability to link to and, if necessary,

command our military in the event of a national catastrophe.

In 1997, Anderson was assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN70), homeported in Bremerton, Wash.

Anderson's next assignment was to II Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Lejeune, N.C. Therein, he was attached to 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit. The acronym MEU is pronounced "myoo."

"A MEU has a total of oh, 22, 23 hundred. You have various elements folded into that, infantry, artillery, tanks, intelligence, logistics, all these things added together ... and a command element. I was with the command element, and I had two other chaplains with me."

Following the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Anderson deployed with the 22nd MEU into Afghanistan for combat operations against Taliban forces



USS Fox (CG-33) was a Belknap class cruiser named for President Abraham Lincoln's assistant secretary of the Navy, Gustavus Fox. Between 1966 and 1993, she made 15 deployments to areas of conflict. It frequently guided tankers through the Strait of Hormuz when Iran and Iraq were at war with each other.

in 2004.

"We spent the summer, from late March until late August in Afghanistan. Most of that was in south-central Afghanistan — very remote, very rural, and you see grinding poverty. The

saddest part was I encountered Afghans who had never heard the name of Jesus. The Marine Corps did not send me to Vietnam in 1970. They waited until I was 53 years old in 2004, humping a pack and sleeping on the ground. I came out of there saying, 'This is a young man's game!'"

Anderson's duties were many, mentoring Marines, conducting church services, delivering communion to Marines at scattered outposts, overseeing the ministries of junior chaplains, and helping deliver medical services to Afghan civilians.

"It was umm, only semi-risky! We only got shot at a few times!"

Sadly, there were casualties: one Marine killed and 11 wounded. Chaplain Anderson conducted an in-country memorial service for the deceased Marine.

"In 2005, I received my concluding assignment to Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Illinois, the Navy's boot camp," he said.

"The facility is a modern, purpose-built, top-of-the-line training facility well-suited to train young men and women to enter the modern Navy."

With 27 years' service, four in the Marines and 23 in the Navy, Anderson retired in 2008, and returned with his family to Oklahoma.

There, Anderson served the Lord by working with funeral directors in Oklahoma City.

"There were several cases of indigent and homeless veterans. The funeral company, as a service to veterans in need, provided casketing, embalming, and burial, usually at one of the two national cemeteries in Oklahoma." Frequently, Anderson officiated funerals and interments for these veterans.

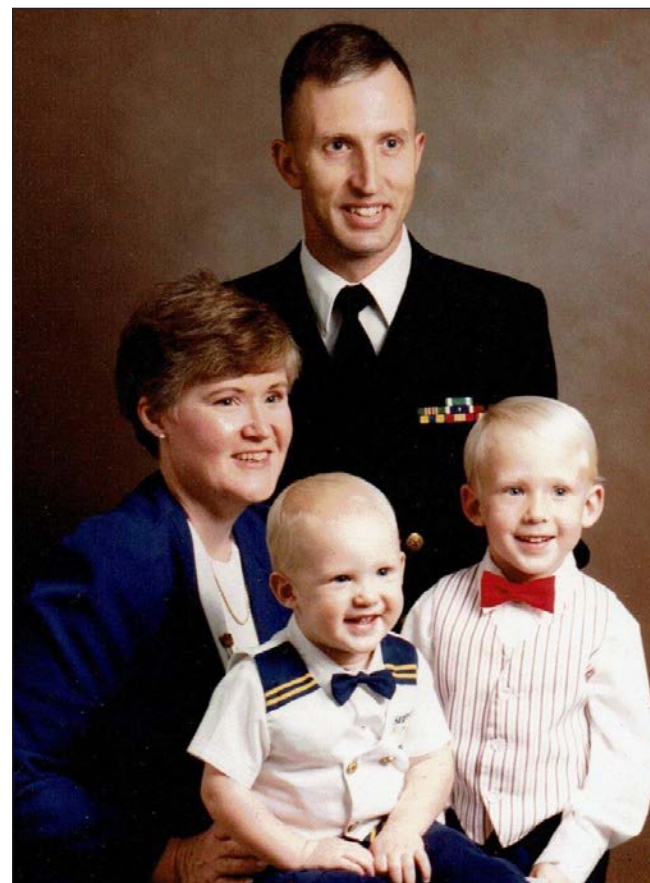
Charles and Judy returned to Minnesota in 2019, buying a house in Florence, only two miles from his family's farm. He was soon called into ministry again at the First Congregational Church of Garvin, where he continues to serve God and his flock to this day.

He is a member of Balaton American Legion Post 237 and the Disabled American Veterans, Chapter 33.

Anderson's reflections on his service, as a Marine, as a Navy officer and a man of the cloth affords him a global perspective on American military service. He is a man of God; we are blessed by having him in our midst.



Judy and "Pastor Chuck" at First Congregational Church in Garvin.



Chaplain Anderson with Judy and the boys.

# Listening Post



Al Zdon of Hibbing Post 222 and John Hoyny of Pine City Post 51 are both alumni of Edison High School in Minneapolis. As the school prepared to mark its 100th anniversary this year, the grads wondered how they could honor veterans of the school during the celebration. Working with Edison teacher David Salzar, they learned that Edison had a Medal of Honor winner during World War II. Richard Edward Kraus earned the nation's highest military award when he threw himself on a hand grenade on the island of Peleliu in the South Pacific in 1944, saving the lives of three Marine comrades. It was decided to create and hang a bronze plaque on the wall of the high school honoring Kraus. Falldin Post 555 of Northeast Minneapolis was asked to contribute to the cost of the plaque. The pictures are from the dedication ceremony at the school on Nov. 11, Veterans Day. It was the first Veterans Day program in many years at the school. From left are Post 555 Sergeant-at-Arms Paul Soderberg, Post 555 Vice Commander Larry Jones, Post 555 Commander Donovan Orttel, Post 555 Vice Commander Fred Schilling, Post 555 Adjutant Ray Eiden and Minnesota Legionnaire Editor Emeritus Al Zdon.



WCCO-TV reporter Reg Chapman emcees at MACV Home for the Holidays, where Minnesota Twins staff fed veterans, and MACV staff provided an array of resources and services. Chapman is a Gulf War veteran and an American Legion member with Omaha Post 1.



Bloomington Post 550 Commander Luis Campero shakes hands with MACV Development Officer Shaun Riffe. Campero and Post 550 Gambling Manager Tim Engstrom hold a \$10,000 donation for MACV to aid in costs of the nonprofit's Bloomington Vet House. The donation was included in a WCCO-TV segment about MACV Home for the Holidays at Target Field, with Reg Chapman reporting. MACV provides housing, legal and employment assistance to veterans, and the house in Bloomington is for veterans with an entire family in need of shelter.



On Nov. 16, during American Education Week, Minneapolis Falldin Post 555 delivered apples to the teachers at Valley View Elementary School in Columbia Heights. From left are Post 555 Commander Donovan Orttel, Principal Jason Kuhlman and Post 555 Adjutant Ray Eiden.



Department Vice Commander Randy Bastyr of North St. Paul Post 39, along with Pheasant Feed Committee Chairman Glenn Mueller of Lewiston Post 90 and Jordan Post 3 Membership Chairman Joe Bares helped run the 81st annual Pheasant Feed at the Minneapolis Veterans Home on Dec. 8.

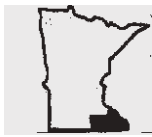


Past Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary President Carol Kottom of Buffalo Unit 270 and Past Wheaton Unit 90 President Laurie Karsky stand next to clothing and items donated by Wheaton post, unit and squadron to the St. Cloud VA Hospital. The donation totaled more than \$4,100. The items go toward veterans in need. The Wheaton Legion Family has made a strong effort over the last five years to donate goods to the St. Cloud VA and to the Fergus Falls Veterans Home.



Veterans and staff alike enjoy the annual Pheasant Feed at the Minneapolis Veterans Home on Dec. 8.

# District commanders



## 1st District Mary Hanson



Happy New Year from the Mighty First. Welcome to 2023. No matter how you celebrate, I hope your Christmas was wonderful and filled with joy.

A few of us ventured out to the Pearl Harbor Rally in Spicer. What a great turnout in spite of the rotten weather we had. Thank you to the Legion Riders and Spicer Post 545 for hosting.

The 1st District held a Christmas Party in Blooming Prairie at The Servicemen's Club on Dec. 11. It was a beautiful day. There was games and prizes and food galore. Donations were taken for Toys for Tots. Thank you to those who attended and especially those who helped put it on. Let's do it again!

Mid-Winter Conference is coming up on Jan. 7 at Post 77 in Owatonna. Starting time is 10 a.m. We will hear from our committee chairs and hold the 1st District Oratorical Contest.

Please make plans to attend.

I have been in contact with a couple of veteran service officers recently. The PACT Act keeps coming up. If you know someone who has lost their spouse, who was possibly covered under the act, encourage them to contact their local county veteran service officer. They would be more than happy to submit a packet. It is possible that they might receive benefits. Learn more at VA.gov/PACT.

Membership is our lifeblood. We can't express that enough. The 1st District is in the planning stages of a revitalization. We need to get the members in Post 1982 and 1982AD worked. Comb the post expired lists and, above all, find new members.



## 2nd District Pam Krill



Greetings! I hope everyone is doing well and enjoying the holiday season.

Now, that Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day have passed, I have taken the time to look back at all of the adventures I have had the opportunity to take and I want to give a huge thanks to each and every member of the American Legion Family.

I have been so humbled when I visit posts throughout the district and to see the amazing things you are all doing and doing because you have the goal to serve our veterans, the American Legion, the community and the families in those communities.

There may not be a spotlight in the paper or an article talking about all the wonderful things, but I have been a witness to what amazing things everyone is doing.

One of the most humbling experiences was Veterans Day and a program at the high school in Windom. Hundreds of people from elementary school, junior high, high school, teachers, moms and dads, grandpas and grandpas, community members and veterans from care facilities in the area.

What an amazing event, which shows the commitment to the community and families, providing the mentorship to our youth and children and the importance

of that day, but it's not always about the number of people you have standing in the room. It was also humbling to head out to the small town of Hardwick, with a room filled with the community members, kids from the local church and the audience who focused on the words of our veterans, and the support and recognition they showed for every veteran who was in attendance.

Finally, my Veterans Day weekend journey landed me in the community of Wabasso. There were members from Vesta, Redwood, Lambertson, Wabasso, Lucan, Milroy, and I apologize if I missed someone, but I was honored to be invited to all of your events.

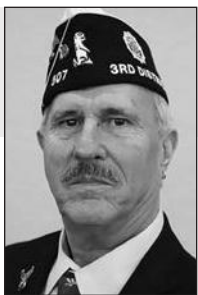
To witness your commitment and dedication solidifies the reasons we do what we do. I look forward to learning from all of you in our journey, and I look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming Mid-Winter Conference in February.

Thank you to everyone for your hard work with membership and continue to do the amazing things you are doing.

I hope you all had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May you enjoy time with your family and friends!



## 3rd District Gary Richardson



By the time you read this, the holidays will be behind us and a new year will be in full swing. As we start the year, let's be ever-mindful of the obligations we have volunteered ourselves to and resolve to get out there and "Be the One." National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola stood before the 2022 National Legion College graduates last month and tasked them to go

back to their post and start making Buddy Checks because no issue is more important to The American Legion than preventing veteran suicides.

Make those calls to your post members that you haven't heard from in a while and reach out to

their families if you can. Sometimes all it takes is someone taking the time to let them know there is someone that cares.

Membership is something we should all strive to improve upon. If you see someone that may be a vet, strike up a casual conversation, you'd

be surprised at how open they can be when they find they are talking to a fellow veteran. Remember — without membership we can't do the job of helping our fellow veterans and our communities.

*Membership: the backbone of our American Legion*



## 4th District David Dahl



The 4th and 5th districts are having a joint Mid-Winter Conference on Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023, at Post 39, North Saint Paul. Conference hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. It is sure to be a conference worthy of your time.

Send your RSVP today to Legion39News@gmail.com.

It's time for another plug for the Armed Forces Services Center. They need your money and/or your post's money. A significant portion of the funds which allow the AFSC to perform its mission comes from veteran service organizations and their members throughout Minnesota. The AFSC is a 501c3 nonprofit, so your post's gambling funds may be donated.

Please visit its website at mnafsc.org, click "Donations" and then print the page. Take that to your post's donations or gambling committee and

have those members consider it as a request for a donation! Please also consider a personal donation!

The AFSC would like to return to 24/7 hours of operation, but it does not have enough volunteers. They need YOU to become a volunteer. On its website, click "Volunteer" then click "join now" to sign up to be a volunteer. Time as a volunteer at the AFSC can be very rewarding. Thank you!

Step up! It won't be long until it is time to have elections at the post and then the district levels. We need YOU to step forward to serve this great organization. What are you going to do during the coming year to help The American Legion to serve veterans and to serve our communities?



## 5th District Lynne Nottage



Happy Holidays! I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas, or a special holiday that you celebrate! With the New Year right around the corner, as I write this article, please remember all the veterans that may need some assistance, whether with their mind, body or spirit. Please take that extra moment to reach out.

I want to take a moment to put out a special thank you to the officers and executive board of the 5th District. They have been working hard with their posts, wherever they are needed. Most of our officers have been around the district for a while. I couldn't have asked for a better group of Legionnaires to work with this year. I look forward to seeing everyone at our joint

Mid-Winter Conference with the 4th District on Jan. 7. We have a great lineup of people and topics.

Our next district meeting will be Saturday, Feb. 4, at 10 a.m. at Minneapolis Post 1. I hope to see you all there.

Reminders: Minneapolis-Richfield Unit 435 has its omelet breakfast on the second Sunday each month and Wold Chamberlain Post 99 has its pancake breakfast on the fourth Sunday each month. Both are held at Post 99. Great food, great people. What more can you ask for?

Stay safe! Go Vikings!



## 6th District Karen O'Bar



Happy New Year to all my Legion Family. I hope everyone is having a good 2023.

On Nov. 17, I attended the first West Stearns County Council meeting in Sauk Centre. As you may know, we haven't had a county council for some time in West Stearns.

Nathan Smith, our county council commander, will have his hands full but has awesome support.

On Nov. 21, I attended the Benton-Sherborn County Council in Becker.

On Nov. 26, I attended the Sauk Centre Post 67 fun bus. Sauk Centre, Melrose, Albany, Holdingford posts had the

pleasure of our bus full of Legionnaires. It was certainly an interesting day.

What a wonderful turnout at Spicer Post 545 for the Pearl Harbor Rally. The 6th District made the Dec. 15 membership target of 75 percent. We are currently at 78.17 percent.

A Department Zoom meeting was held Dec. 7. It had another great turnout. A Zoom meeting for districts 6 and 9 was held Dec. 11, with good turnout and information.

On Dec. 12, I attended the Morrison County Council

Christmas Party at Royalton Post 137.

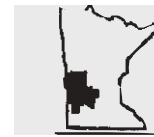
On Dec. 17, Mike and I will help at the Little Falls Veterans Cemetery with a laying of the wreaths ceremony. We have had the honor of helping for a few years. After the ceremony, there will be a chilli cookoff at Little Falls Post 46.

On Jan. 14, we will have our

6th District Oratorical Contest, and it will be at Post 46.

The Sweetheart Rally is Feb. 4 at Osseo Post 172. The 6th District Mid-Winter Conference is at Ironton Post 443 on Feb. 11.

On Feb. 13, the Morrison County Council will meet at Post 46. Our next executive board meeting is Feb. 19 at St. Augusta Post 621.



## 7th District Karen Welander



Our Mid-Winter Conference will be Saturday, Jan. 28, with 8-9 a.m. registration at Granite Falls Post 69. We will present certificates and awards.

We say we are proudly "still serving America." Let's not forget this. It is not true that we are insignificant. Even the smallest word or deed has an impact. That buddy check that you do makes a big impact. These long cloudy days of winter have an impact on the spirit of those living alone.

Make your post the place to raise the spirits of your battle buddies by opening up to coffee, bringing in treats, or a Saturday morning doughnut time with

Dad and Son.

SAL and Jr.

Auxiliary

are invited to play cornhole competition. This impacts the community and allows us to "Be the One" for the American Legion family.

"I got your six" is who the family is and what we do.

As this new year begins, let us reassess all the great things our American Legion Family is doing to help veterans, families, children and communities to be strong and successful in this great country. Let's all vow to do a little more this coming year.



## 8th District Larry Pocrnich



Hi, veterans.

Here it is 2023. Another new year. I hope everyone celebrated with family and other veterans. The new year brings a new focus on membership. I hear the department membership director has new ideas from being at National Legion College.

I have been trying but the 8th District is still in fifth place. We are making the percentage at cutoff dates but lagging at some posts. We should be at 75 percent at posts. Let's try to contact the members who have not renewed or even the members who lapsed a year or two.

The 8th District Mid-Winter Conference will be via Zoom.

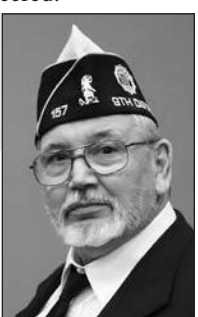
Look for details in an e-mail.

There were over 50 Christmas dinners given to veterans and families on the 22nd of December, compliments of the United of of Northeast Minnesota, United 4 Veterans, veterans organizations and various donations. The families are nominated by other people in the 8th District.

Look for the upcoming rallies in the "What's Happening?" section of the Legionnaire. If anyone is interested in going, contact me. Thank you to all who volunteered.



## 9th District Terry Buraas



With the economy in big trouble, the price of food is soaring, but does anyone ask why the price of diesel fuel is stuck at a dollar plus than gasoline?

Diesel is the cheapest thing to produce but our government lets the price to be set by the industry. Bring the price down and the price for food will go down and the price for anything moved by truck will go down.

Lawmakers are brain dead if they can't figure that one out. We can toss billions to the war in Europe but not at something basic as fuel to run the economy.

Yes, as a senior, it is nice to finally get a healthy Social Security

raise but the government throws money around like candy. Close the borders to anyone coming to this country to get a better life because they are not being repressed by their government, their economy is in the toilet, too!

Get with it Congress and fix it.



## 10th District William Gordon



Greetings and Happy New Year. I hope everyone was able to have a great holiday.

I think the holidays really start with Halloween and continue through New Year's.

During this time there are so many events we share

Continued on Page 13

# Listening Post



Walker Post 134 Commander Janelle Mankie prepares to retire 700 unserviceable flags last fall.



Walker Post 134 Commander Janelle Mankie places flags in a burn barrel.



Dent Post 148 received assistance from around 200 students in retiring unserviceable American flags on Sept. 14. The students were from St. Henry's Area School and St. Paul's Calvary Lutheran School, both of Perham.



Twenty-four veterans participated in the Veterans Pheasant Hunt at OMK Hunting Lodge in Big Stone County on Oct. 29. Another 16 people helped with the hunt. Donating to the hunt were Wheaton American Legion Post 80 and SAL Squadron 80, Clinton American Legion Post 258, Twin Valley Tire of Wheaton & Milbank (S.D.), OMK Family Partnership, Danny Walters Farms and Edina Realty.



Bill Barbknecht of Underwood Post 489 presents a \$1,500 check from his post for Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary President Mary Kuperus' project. She is raising \$30,000 for the meditation rooms at the three new state veterans homes (\$10,000 for each). The amount she has raised, as of press time, is \$16,672.



Every Third Saturday hosted a Thanksgiving meal on Nov. 23 at Minneapolis Wold-Chamberlain Post 99. Around 80 people were served a turkey dinner with all the trimmings.

## District Commanders

Continued from Page 12

with our friends and family — neighborhood potlucks, rallies, dinners, fundraisers and celebrations of faith. These gatherings are cherished times because we share them with others. There are no words in the English language that can really describe the feelings of watching children experiencing and exploring these events in wide-eyed wonder. I am profoundly grateful for all the people who have touched my life.

Recently I had surgery for a new hip. The handshakes, hugs, words of encouragement, cards letters, texts and emails I received are very humbling. I have many thank-yous to accomplish.

I ask you to do only one more thing. Please take a few minutes and reach out to a fellow veteran or member you have not seen for a while, and those veterans trying to get back on their feet. Your words of encouragement are so important to them.

I am looking forward to 2023 with renewed hope for our organization. It is an honor to share the work; we need to do together with *all of you*.

Once again please recognize Boy Scout of the Year. (Recently, there was a 12-year Boy Scout in the news for all the great work he did. I hope he can be nominated by a Legion post in his community).

Also, recognize Servicemember of the Year, Legion Member

of the Year, Police Officer of the Year, First Responder of the Year. Are you putting together their submission packages?

Have you gotten the names of the future leaders who will be going to Boys State and Girls State, the candidates competing in the Oratorical Contests, the shooting competitions, and those who are going to Legionville?

Adjutants, please do not forget to submit your CPR reports and officer's lists on time. No matter the size of your post, your report tells us all what a fantastic job *your* post is doing in your community.

One more reminder for this new year. I am still scheduling post visits and hope to visit as many posts as I can between now and June 2023. If I have not yet visited your post. Please send me an email [wgordon2494@hotmail.com](mailto:wgordon2494@hotmail.com) with the date, time, location (meeting place address). Also, if you have an event coming up you would like me to attend, please send me an invite via email or a telephone call (763-515-3686).

I will do my very best to ensure I attend. The most treasured memories you make during your journey are those you have shared with someone else.

The ancient Celtics believed our friendships were a mystical linking that was essential for a complete life. The Gaelic word for friend is "ahamkara."



Ashby Auxiliary Unit 357 member Joyce Lacey, who is vice president of community engagement for the Navy League of Minnesota, placed wreaths at Fort Snelling with Legion Post 1982 member and Navy League of Minnesota President Joseph Fraser on Dec. 17 for Wreaths Across America.



Delano Post 377 donated \$1,000 to 23rd Veteran, which provides a peer-to-peer approach to helping veterans dealing with trauma and other issues. From left are 23rd Veteran 23V Minneapolis Recon Coordinator Daniel Crawford, Post 377 Commander Paul Hoiland and 23rd Veteran Graduate Program Manager Kurt Roettjer.



# The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 23 Vol. 6

President Mary Kuperus • Treasurer Cathy Radil, cathy@mnala.org

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January 2023



Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary President Mary Kuperus stops wrapping for a quick photo op.



Elves visited the Minneapolis Veterans Home Gift Shop on Dec. 7. From left are Ken Gibson, Chris Hendry, Sandy Gibson, Eileen Gibson, Diane Stokrich, Sharon Schmidt, Marylee Seymour and (name unavailable). In the front are Ken and Mary Kuperus.

## Remember, state to have 3 new vet homes in 2023

### President's Column

Mary Kuperus



Welcome to January! I have been blessed to be able to attend many events. We attended the Lester Prairie American Legion Family Christmas Party.

We were so honored to deliver items to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, help at the Minneapolis Veterans Home Gift Shop and attend the 81st annual Pheasant Feed. We attended the St. Michael American Legion Family Christmas Dinner.

We are scheduled to attend the Fridley and Bagley American Legion Family's Christmas parties. Hopefully, the weather will cooperate! Thank you all for your kindness and hospitality. It is so great to see members enjoying each other's company and eating such wonderful food!

A big thank-you goes out to Suzette Maluchnik and Bev Grose, of our Gift Shop Committee, for making sure our veterans in the five veteran homes and four veteran hospitals were able to receive Christmas gifts.

Most of them received a \$25 gift card due to volunteers not being able to be in the homes to have actual Gift Shop events. We also want to thank all the staff in the homes and hospitals for all the help for delivering the gift cards and giving them a Christmas party.

Thank you also to our department staff and the home and hospital representatives for all their work with this big project. It takes many people to make this big job happen. Each resident veteran received a \$10 bill or credit at the hospital canteen

for purchases. We must remember with three new veteran homes being built in Minnesota, funds for these programs will need to increase.

The Sweetheart Membership Rally is coming up on Feb. 4 at the Osseo-Maple Grove American Legion. The American Legion Auxiliary is hosting this event. Social and membership turn-in is at 10:30 a.m., meal at 11:30 a.m. with the program to follow. A reservation form can be found on the mnala.org website under the December unit mailing link. Paying at the door is fine, but it is preferable to please reserve and pay by Jan. 28.

National Vice Commander of the Midwest Region Glenn Wahus will be visiting from North Dakota. (See Page 7 for more.)

As we "Serve and Honor Every Day," let's remember all veterans who have served our country at home and abroad. Continue to support our military and their families whether serving overseas or stateside. Our communities continue to need our support in many ways. Thank you for all you do for our veterans!

Mary Kuperus of New London Unit 537 is the president of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota. Her theme is "Serve and Honor Every Day."



More elves arrived on Dec. 8. From left are Chris Hendry, Marge Maule, Sandy Gibson, (name unavailable), Marylee Seymour and Ken Gibson. In front are Andrea Dorner and Julie Boden.



## JOB OPENING AT ALA DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA

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

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 meetings and may include 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 Kuperus American Legion Auxiliary Department President 313 Pine St. SW, New London MN 56273 Or emailed to: wmkuperus@tds.net.

A job description and application form are available on request. This position open until filled. Interviewing will begin in December.



The World War II Carpetbaggers Reunion gathers for a photo in Savannah, Ga.

## Memories made at reunion

By Jenny Nelson  
4th District President

On Tuesday, Oct. 11, many people arrived at the 36th World War II Carpetbagger Reunion in Savannah, Ga.

We gathered in our hospitality room and enjoyed our Olive Garden Buffet. We welcomed two new families, Robert, John and Nancy Hayes, and Chuck and Kay Lamberth. Even though everyone was tired from traveling, we had great time getting to know each other and reunited with old friends!

Our tables were decorated with the black B-24 centerpieces. It really set the tone for our week. The Carpetbaggers are named for Operation Carpetbagger, which provided an aerial supply of weapons and other items to resistance fighters in France, Italy, Netherlands and Belgium.

On Wednesday morning, we started with the air-conditioned Morons Comedy Trolley Tour. The tour guys had us laughing and singing as we made our way around beautiful Savannah.

Wednesday evening, we took the next trolley to the old historic Savannah Theatre featuring "Savannah Live," a talented singing and dancing group! It was an action-packed musical, and they did a great job bringing attention to our own Carpetbaggers, Orrin Brown and Bob Holmstrom. They received a standing ovation. It was a great evening!

On Thursday, we started the day with our annual business meeting and connected with Bill Becker via Zoom. We voted for me to be president and Bart Bartholomew to be vice president for next year. Bill Becker will continue to be our secretary/treasurer. It was wonderful to see him be involved with his Carpetbagger family! We were all able to greet him.

As good as planning can be, there were some unexpected things that happened. I was told that we did not have transportation to the 8th Air Force Museum from the hotel shuttle due to corporate changes.

Instead of incurring charges for our 3.5-mile trip, Bob Holmstrom told me to call the local American Legion.

I contacted the 1st District American Legion Auxiliary President Sabrina Putney and, in swift timing, Post 36 Commander Doug Andrews made things happen! He asked me if we were OK with a transport bus where the windows didn't go all the way up. He said it was safe. He thought he could get it started, and it was in process of renovation. I accepted his kind gesture!

Our group is always up for adventure, and it was! He showed up with a 24-passenger transport bus with removed windows, duct-taped fenders and there were bungee cords holding the doors shut!

He even provided us

with music! It was fun, and they joined us in the museum for the tour. We bought their dinner, along with District 1 Commander Casey Nash, Post 500 Commander James Putney, and Past Post 500 Commander G John Parker, all from Georgia. The 8th Air Force Museum was filled with history. We visited our Carpetbagger memorial that was placed there years ago.

Orrin and Bob were coined with a challenge coin from President & CEO Scott Loehe. They served us a great chicken dinner in style next to the B-17 displayed in the hanger area. The museum may have access to a B-24 for future display in their hanger. It was a great opportunity for us to get to know our new friends and share stories. We made it back in one piece and enjoyed our adventure! Then, back to the hospitality room, where we played customized Carpetbagger Bingo and Savannah Bingo with our M&Ms.

Friday was the busiest day of all. Mid-morning, we went on a great tour of Savannah and viewed the River Street area with trolley driver Brenda Langley. We arrived at Tybee Island for our private Dolphin Tour. We saw hundreds of dolphins as we made our way out to the Tybee Island Lighthouse overlooking the Atlantic Ocean!

The dolphins were active, and the weather was perfect. The music played was perfect for our ride on the water. Our captain and his first mate were awesome. They were honored to have pictures taken with Orrin and Bob. We went to the Crab Shack for lunch where we saw alligators and other reptile wildlife. This outdoor restaurant was very close to the water and had good seafood. We stopped at the Tybee Island Light Station for pictures and headed back to the hotel for our "Taste of Savannah" dinner and program.

We invited our new Legion friends to our special evening. We had food from Jim & Nick's, a local barbecue favorite. We ordered an assortment of Savannah specialties including collards, beans, brisket, praline pecans, banana pudding and more. It was delicious.

We had a proper flag introduction lead by Commander James Putney. The first female commander of Georgia Casey Nash spoke to us about her seven deployments and her personal journey. Auxiliary President

Sabrina Putney gave greetings to us in Georgia welcome style.

The program continued with a memorial to remember the ones who have flown their final missions, and we watched Gene Polinsky's speech from his Belgium award presentation. We launched the information about our new website via prerecording with Katie Sanders. Katie Sanders and Mara Storey have worked very hard on this. We sent them each a beautiful acrylic award to show our thanks. The website is still in progress, but you can check it out here: <https://wwiicarpetbaggers.omeka.net/>

We had a dedicated sharing time for anyone who wanted to share about their father. Orrin and Bob shared some of their stories and that was fun and meaningful for all of us!

Two very special things happened at this reunion that none of us will forget. Our new members John and Robert Hayes have been searching for information about their dad who they believed to be a Carpetbagger. They have been searching for 30 plus years. Don Marshall was determined to find answers for them. He stayed up half the night searching and found some answers! He discovered that their dad had orders to transfer into the 406th night leaflet squadron. It was in the later days just before the war ended.

It appears that they did fly 18 missions after May 7 dropping to people in Germany. Those missions could have been leaflet drops to tell the partisans on the ground that the war was over, although more research needs to be done to confirm.

The other special thing happened while Bart Bartholomew was displaying his dad's short snorter. A short snorter is a series of paper bills scotch taped together in chronological order. Each bill represents a country, that they flew over, parachuted into, or landed in. The various bank notes are from the country they visited. The notes were often signed by friends and crew members. On this short snorter, there were signatures of various friends and crew. Julie Echelmeier was looking at the bills and screamed out in surprise to discover that her dad's signature was on one of the bills! Her dad, Dale R. Keirn and Barts Dad probably knew each other in some way! Julie does not have a lot of information on her dad's service, so this was so very special for her and memorable for us to witness this!

Some of us kids are blessed to still hear our dad's experiences. However, some of our members join us to seek answers. Many kids continue to attend reunions long after their Carpetbagger passes. It is that common bond that hold us together!

As all good things come to an end, we had to say our farewells until next time. It was a wonderful week, and we look forward to seeing you all at the next reunion!



Carpetbaggers gather in front of a B-24.



A Blue Star Banner was presented to Byron American Legion Post 119 Commander Carl DeWaard in honor of his daughter serving in the military. Presenting the banner is Department National Security Chairman LuAnn Marschel.



At the 2022 Veterans Day Banquet, Wheaton Unit 80 had several ladies who received Longevity Awards. Pictured below are Liela Fridgen (75 years), Pauline Johnson (20 years) and Betty Lampe (45 years.) Unable to attend were Karen Boothby (20 years), Betty Weick (35 years), Julie Teberg (50 years), Eileen Honzo (65 years), Roxanne Lokkesmoe (70 years) and Clara Honzo (75 years).

## Have you signed up for legislative alerts?

By Judy Ackerman  
Legislation Chairman

The 118th Congress will convene on Jan. 3. Now is the time to get familiar with the names of our representatives and senators on the state and federal levels. Get ready to contact them on important veterans' and active military issues.

Have you signed up for the Legislative Alerts from The American Legion? If the answer is *no*, it's not too late. It takes less than five minutes to sign up for the alerts. These alerts are a wonderful tool to keep our membership updated on the Legislative priorities of the American Legion. If the answer is *yes*, thank you very much for getting involved. Every voice counts.

To sign up for the alerts, go to [legion.org/legislative/action](https://legion.org/legislative/action) and follow the directions.

The legislative alert that came out this week involves the Camp Lejeune Justice Act. The alert is encouraging members to contact their senators and representatives to protect out veterans from unscrupulous lawyers who will charge exorbitant fees for their services.

Veterans Day on the Hill is scheduled for March 30. Please plan to attend.

Doors to the Armory open at 10. Lunch will be served at 11 a.m. The Veterans March to the Rally is at 12:40 p.m. Rally in the Rotunda from 1 to 2 p.m. Topics to include:

- Passing a clean veterans omnibus bill.
- Ensuring surviving spouses have access to property tax relief.
- Fixing the post 9/11 service bonus to include all current resident veterans.
- Increase the amount for the property tax value exclusion.

If you have any questions regarding Veterans Day on the Hill, please contact [trent@davmn.org](mailto:trent@davmn.org).

Please see the Department of Minnesota unit mailing for a flier that can be copied and distributed to the local units, posts, squadrons and ALR chapters.

Let's turn out in masses to encourage our legislators to focus on our veterans issues.





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### MDVA hires Bemidji admin

BEMIDJI — The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has announced the hiring of the administrator for the future Bemidji Veterans Home, scheduled to open in mid-2023.

Kevin Gish, a graduate of Bemidji State University, has more than 30 years of experience in administrative

and operational health care. He has worked at United Healthcare Corp., North Memorial Medical Center, Essentia Health and Health Dimensions Group.

After the hiring of the director of nursing, he will be leading the effort to fill out the staff. He will be actively involved in the effort to complete construction, which began in August 2021. The \$45.5 million facility will house 72 private quarters for

veterans and certain family members who require skilled nursing.

Gish also has a master's degree in health care administration from the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management. He has lived in Bemidji since 1995 and is a native of Mahanomen.

Gish and his wife, Mary, are parents of two adult children and a yellow Labrador. He enjoys fishing, hunting, cycling, taking care of his woods and following college hockey.



**Kevin Gish**



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### It's a good time to try Minnesota Legion College

By Mike Ash  
 Training Committee

Now is the time for all good Legionnaires to sign up for the upcoming Minnesota American Legion College.

In 2023, we will hold two sessions — in April and October.

Due to class size limitations, you need to make your reservations as soon as possible to save your spot. We have something for everyone. Plus, if you have a specific topic you'd like to hear about, just ask on your application. How's that for service?

We suggest you talk to your post or district about sponsoring your attendance (for \$200, it's the best deal going).

Just go online at mnlegion.org and under programs click on Minnesota Legion College and fill out the online form. The 2023 college dates are April 20 through 23 and Oct. 12 through 15. It takes place at Camp Ripley.

See you at college!  
 Have questions? Contact Training Committee chair Mike Ash at [mikeash2021@gmail.com](mailto:mikeash2021@gmail.com).



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