

Legionnaire



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Veterans Helping Veterans

February 2020



Past Department of Minnesota Commander Peggy Moon smiles at the podium in Building 15 of the Minneapolis Veterans Home Jan. 9. She was commander when the bridge was declared unsafe and, long after her term, lobbied for the funding to repair the historic truss bridge. She heads to Washington in March as Minnesota's alternative on the National Executive Committee.

At long last, the vets home bridge opens

2014-15 Legion commander pushed for funding of repairs

MINNEAPOLIS — New Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Larry Herke “probably thought I was stalking him,” said Peggy Moon at the opening of the steel truss bridge outside the Minneapolis Veterans Home on Jan. 9.

She said she bothered him so much about getting the bridge opened that Herke began approaching her first.

The bridge was declared unsafe in 2014. Moon was the Department of Minnesota commander for The American Legion in 2014-15 and chaired the Commanders’ Task Force at the time. She and the CTF pushed for the state to repair the bridge when Commissioner Larry Shellito ran the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and again when Herke

began in January 2019.

Moon now is the National Executive Committee alternative for the Legion’s Department of Minnesota.

Without the bridge, the Minneapolis Veterans Home, which the MDVA runs, only has one means of coming and going — 46th Avenue South winding through Minnehaha Regional Park, Moon noted in her comments at the opening ceremony. In the summer, the corner of 46th and Godfrey Parkway becomes congested with tourists and locals alike enjoying Minnehaha Falls and the park amenities.

“If you drive that road three or four times, then you realize this is not going to work,” Moon said.

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Send in the cavalry



Jeremy Wolfsteller welcomes veterans into his office on the fourth floor of the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis. It is Room 4H-104. His days are filled with assisting veterans — medical claims, health care, financial hardships, homelessness and service-discharge upgrades. He also visits places in Minnesota where vets get care, and he produces detailed reports, which are posted at mnlegion.org.

Combat-wounded veteran Jeremy Wolfsteller discovered his passion was helping others veterans, so he made it his career

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

By Tim Engstrom

When veterans seeking health care deal with the Department of Veterans Affairs, it can be difficult. It is a large agency, and there are various departments within the department. The veterans end up working with multiple employees of differing skill levels and roles, too.

But when veterans work with Jeremy Wolfsteller of The American Legion, they get the same person every day. He knows the VA. Or as they say in the military: He

knows the drill.

“Thank you,” one veteran said during a visit to his office. “You are the first person who stepped in and got me answers.”

Wolfsteller is The American Legion’s department service officer at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, and his story shows there is a purpose-filled life to be lived after being wounded in battle.

As a cavalry scout, he was shot June 25, 2005, in Tal Afar, Iraq, while fighting insurgents with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. The bullet ricocheted through his body and never exited. The two men who saved his life on the battlefield died in another battle later in the Iraq War. Wolfsteller underwent a nine-hour life-saving surgery in Baghdad. After 10 months at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, where he learned to walk again, he

transferred to Evans Army Community Hospital at Fort Carson, Colorado, where, often still in a wheelchair, he spent a year helping families who have lost a service member.

Wolfsteller medically retired from the Army on April 1, 2007, and moved back to Minnesota.

“And that’s where the after-life began,” he said.

He doesn’t walk with a cane today, but his limp is noticeable, kind of like there is one in use. In 2007, when he was 28 and living with his parents, he indeed had a fold-up cane.

“I would accidentally leave it places,” Wolfsteller said. “If you go 27 years of walking without a cane, it’s hard to get used to one.”

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Airport spot for troops gets new home

MINNEAPOLIS — The Armed Forces Service Center cut a red, white and blue ribbon on Jan. 9, celebrating the new location for members of the military to stay when they fly in and out of Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport.

Among the honored guests holding scissors were four siblings — Nancy Purdum Hall, John Purdum, Jill Purdum and Penne Purdum.

They are the children of Maggi Purdum. Maggi Purdum’s son Scott Purdum died in the Navy during a plane crash in the Vietnam War, in March 1970. He had mentioned to his mother that service members lacked a place to stay when traveling, and you would see them on duffel bags and other odd arrangements on floors and benches when

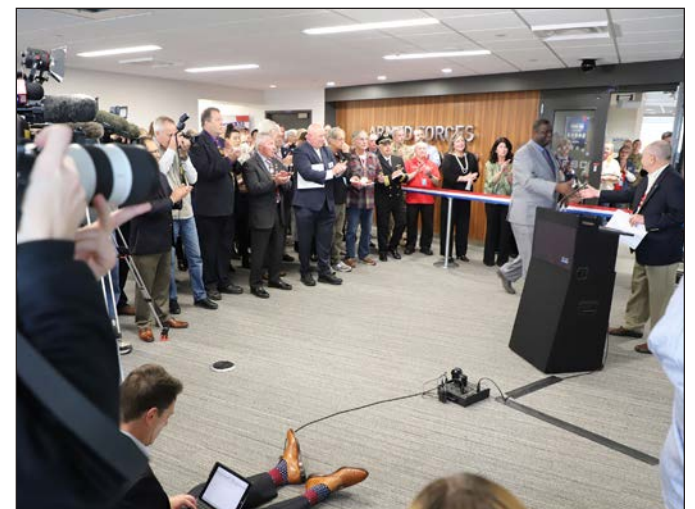
traveling through airports. After Scott died, Maggi pushed for MSP to provide a space for traveling military, and in November 1970, it was the first in the country to have one.

“Now they all do that,” Nancy told Twin Cities reporters and a crowd of veterans, active military, airport workers and others packed into the room outside the new AFSC.

Most are operated by the USO, but the one in Minneapolis is an independent nonprofit. The American Legion and other veteran service organizations provide funds to the center, among other funding sources, like Delta Air Lines. The American Legion has a member who sits on the board — presently it is 4th District Commander Joe Jansen.

He had a pair of scissors, too.

Continued on Page 12



Rick Dale, chairman of the Armed Forces Service Center, welcomes WCCO reporter and veteran Reg Chapman.



Minnesota Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Larry Herke snips the ribbon on the 627-foot bridge over Minnehaha Creek outside the Minneapolis Veterans Home on Jan. 9. Though popular among cyclists and pedestrians, it is the only bridge open to automobiles downstream from Minnehaha Falls. The bridge originally was built by the Minneapolis Park Board in 1908 and these days belongs to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. Former American Legion Department of Minnesota Commander Peggy Moon is in a red Legion cap a little right of center. In the white Legion cap a bit farther right is District 4 and 5 Vice Commander Teresa Ash. State lawmakers with the Minneapolis Veterans Home in their districts stand next to Herke. They are Sen. Patricia Torres Ray on the right and Rep. Jim Davnie on the left. Former Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry W. Shellito is on the far left. Officials from other veterans service organizations were there. Among them were Veterans of Foreign Wars, Amvets and Paralyzed Veterans of America. Many MDVA employees and Minneapolis police officers and firefighters attended, too.



Minnesota Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Larry Herke tells of the bridge's history on Jan. 9 at the opening ceremony. The Minneapolis parks board built the bridge in 1908, the first year Ford produced the Model T. It was an age when horse and buggies shared the roads with cars.



State Sen. Patricia Torres Ray of Senate District 63 said the bridge connects the neighborhood to the 53 acres of the Minneapolis Veterans Home.



State Rep. Jim Davnie of House District 63A thanked many groups, then noted his thanks to the steel workers who made the repairs happen despite cold temperatures.

Continued from Page 1

It makes it tough on employees and volunteers, but, moreover, it leaves the veterans home in a difficult situation should an emergency arise with their veteran residents, such as an ambulance going from the home to the VA Medical Center to the south.

Moon said following bills through the Legislature is no easy task, and it requires constantly letting another batch of lawmakers know about the desire of the veterans' community.

"Every now and then it would be observed that Ben Johnson got a call from a senator who wanted to know who the hell Peggy Moon was," she said, adding that's how she knew she was doing her job well.

Johnson is the MDVA legislative director.

Herke, right after he was sworn in a year prior, sat down at his desk and read the first email. The sender was from the local community and offered congratulations, then told him to get the bridge open.

"Today," he said Jan. 9, "I get to make good on that promise."

The history of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs begins with the Minneapolis Veterans Home, founded in 1888 as the Old Soldiers' Home and a place for indigent veterans of the Civil War, Herke said.

"It was not until World War I that medical care was provided," he said.

Bridge No. 5756 was constructed in 1908. The Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners wanted a way to connect to the Old Soldiers' Home.

Herke said the bridge is "a rare example of steel deck arch construction in Minnesota."

It was designed by Bayne & Hewett Co. and listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Structures in April 1989.

In 2014, the Minnesota Department of Transportation recommended its closure to pedestrians and motor vehicles alike.



The state color guard from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, left, shared the duties with the color guard from Waite Park Post 428 of The American Legion on Jan. 9 at the Minneapolis Veterans Home.

The Minnesota Department of Administration and the MDVA partnered on the bridge funding. In 2015, the Legislature approved funds for the design, and, in 2017, the special session bonding bill included \$7.9 million for the repairs — replacing both approaches, reinforcing and painting the spans.

Herke thanked the Department of Administration, Department of Transportation and Department of Management and Budget.

Design work began in 2015, with the early repair work happening in late fall 2017. Some steel and welding issues delayed the project, Herke said,

but repair work resumed within the last year, and, in July, crews began the final work on the two approaches.

The bridge was inspected in December.

Some painting and minor work will be completed this spring, Herke said.

"We're excited to reopen the bridge today," he said.

State Sen. Patricia Torres Ray said she was proud to secure funding and preserve the bridge for future generations of veterans and residents of the neighborhood.

"I cannot think of anything more important I do in the Minnesota Senate," she said.

State Rep. Jim Davnie recognized the site's value as historical to the city and to the state.

"I'm pleased that the bridge respects and holds that heritage," he said.

The Minnesota Veterans Home is in the districts Torres Ray and Davnie represent.

Douglas Hughes, deputy commissioner for the MDVA, oversees the five veterans homes around the state, and he hosted the ceremony for the bridge opening inside Building 15 of the Minneapolis Veterans Home. The ribbon cutting followed, outside on the east end of the bridge.

Bridge 5756 fast facts:

- Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners constructed the bridge in 1908 to connect vehicle traffic to the Minnesota Soldiers' Home.
- The bridge is named the Soldiers' Home Bridge.
- It is a nine-span steel deck arch.
- It is 627 feet long.
- The Soldiers' Home Bridge "is significant as a rare example of steel deck arch construction in Minnesota and for its association with designers Bayne & Hewett Co. and the steel manufacturer Minneapolis Steel & Machinery Co. Additionally, the bridge is a contributing resource to the Minnesota Soldier's Historic District and the Grand Rounds Historic District," according to MnDOT.
- The bridge features two decorative four-bulb lampposts at each end and six one-bulb lampposts along the way.
- The bridge has a historic metal lattice railing just outside non-historic eight-foot-tall chain-link fencing.
- It is possible to park in a lot off Minnehaha Drive, walk over the bridge to the Minneapolis Veterans Home campus, take a left and follow 46th Avenue, take another left on a trail that goes under the bridge twice (once on each side of the creek), then to Minnehaha Falls, then follow the park trails south back to the car.

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Can Minn. effectively end veteran homelessness?

Commissioner calls on help of landlords and veteran organizations

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has a goal of becoming the fourth state to effectively end veteran homelessness.

Commissioner Larry Herke said 532 veterans were placed in homes in 2019 — the most ever since tracking began in 2014 — but there were 533 new or reoccurring veterans who came for help last year. “I believe it is due to success and word has got around,” Herke said.

He said he expected a bounce in numbers signing up for the Homeless Veterans Registry. He said many homeless veterans have income, though not enough to support themselves.

Herke said what his department desires is 600 one-bedroom apartments, and he is seeking leads wherever he goes.

He admitted South Dakota probably is going to beat Minnesota to being the fourth state, but getting it accomplished in 2020 remains a priority.

“I do believe it is do-able,” he said. “I can see we can do this.”

As of Tuesday, Jan. 21, there were 274 people on the Homeless Veterans Registry. Of those, 185 were eligible for VA health care, and 89 were not. There were 56 unsheltered (meaning the rest were couch-hopping or staying in temporary quarters, such as a homeless shelter), and there were 57 chronic (meaning repeated homeless).

The registry divides the state into 10 districts. Three districts — northwest, southeast and southwest — had no homeless veterans. Herke mentioned how small communities often are swift when it comes to helping struggling veterans, often before

needing to register.

There were 152 in Hennepin County, 42 in Ramsey County, 16 in St. Louis County, 32 in the central district, two in the west central district, three in the northeast district and 27 in a district comprising the suburban counties of Washington, Dakota, Scott, Carver and Anoka.

The central district includes St. Cloud. The west central district has Moorhead.

The commissioner is asking the Legislature for \$3.17 million in the supplemental budget for biennium 2020-21 and \$6.33 for 2022-23 to fund 150 housing vouchers for veterans who do not qualify for HUD-VASH vouchers (which come from federal sources).

Herke is asking for help from The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans and other veteran groups in getting the funding request through the Legislature.

Veterans Day on the Hill is slated for April 20, and it is one of the issues highly likely to be pushed.

“I do need help from everyone,” Herke said.

- Causes of veteran homelessness vary:
- Rising rents.
 - Falling behind on rents.
 - Job losses.
 - Self-imposed barriers, such as addictions.
 - Legal troubles.

Landlords can call HousingLink at 866-522-2827 to list current or upcoming



Larry Herke

vacancies on a veterans-exclusive vacancy list. The state offers incentive and mitigation funding presently available for landlords willing to rent to veterans facing housing hurdles.

Other states that have effectively ended veteran homelessness are Connecticut, Delaware and Virginia. To achieve the status, the states must meet benchmarks set by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Seventy-eight cities or regions have qualified as effectively ending veteran homelessness, too. Des Moines, Iowa; New Orleans; Philadelphia; Las Vegas; Atlanta; LaCrosse, Wisconsin; Lincoln, Nebraska are among many cities on the list.

Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth and St. Cloud are not on the list.

However, five of the rural districts for the Minnesota Homeless Veteran Registry are: southeast (Rochester and Mankato), southwest, west central (Moorhead), northwest and northeast.

The MDVA works with several nonprofit partners, such as the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV), the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the counties in its efforts on veteran homeless.

Fighting homelessness, the MDVA has spent \$195,400 on staff costs and \$281,600 in programmatic costs in the current fiscal year. Additionally, through its State Soldiers Assistance Program, it has spent \$596,038 on shelter, \$345,529 on home costs and \$75,423 on utilities.

Endorsements

Susan Edwards endorsed for Department chaplain

Susan Edwards has been endorsed for Department chaplain by Billie Brown Post 627 in Nisswa. She was also endorsed by the 6th District Executive Committee at the October meeting.



Susan Edwards

Edwards served in the United States Air Force from 1980 to 1985 as a law enforcement K-9 handler. She is a 16-year Legion member and is currently serving as post commander at Billie Brown Post 627 in Nisswa, 6th District adjutant and chairwoman of the Department Law and Order Committee.

She has served as Post chaplain, Post adjutant and District adjutant and District chaplain for the 6th District. Edwards was also honored to serve on the Children and Youth Committee

at the 2019 National Convention.

A 2019 graduate of the National American Legion College, she is a strong proponent for women veterans, an active Legion Rider and editor of the 6th District Newsletter. She is a member of Unit 627 of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Edwards recently was ordained by the Universal Life Church.

Susan and her husband, Paul (current 6th District commander, Army and Air Force veteran, 6th District member of the Auxiliary), are both retired from the Boeing Co. They have been married 30 years, have a son currently serving in the United States Army, and two grandchildren.



Four pillars:

1. Veterans Rehabilitation
2. National Security
3. Americanism
4. Children & Youth

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

4 FANTASTIC WAYS TO EXPERIENCE MNHS

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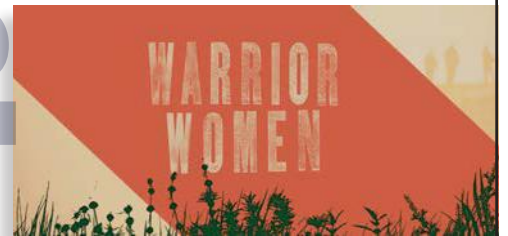
Learn stories of today's Dakota and Ojibwe peoples in the new **Our Home: Native Minnesota** exhibit, and visit the **Minnesota's Greatest Generation** exhibit to be inspired by a remarkable group of Americans. Free admission 3-8 pm on Tuesdays! Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.

Our Home exhibit major sponsor U.S. Bank, media partner StarTribune.



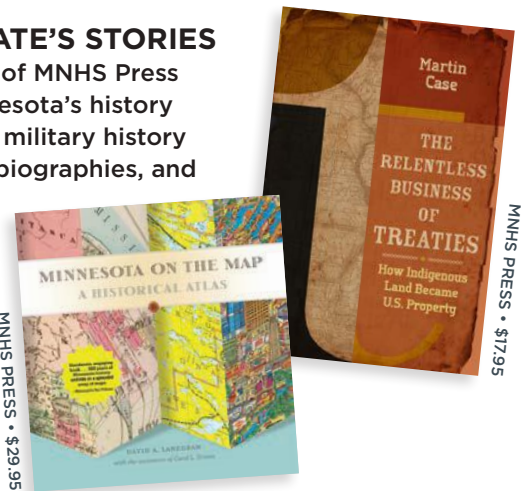
2 ATTEND A FREE SCREENING

See a film about activist women in the 1970s American Indian Movement, followed by a conversation with AIM leader Madonna Thunder Hawk. **Warrior Women Film Screening & Conversation**, Feb 25, Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.



3 READ OUR STATE'S STORIES

Explore hundreds of MNHS Press books about Minnesota's history and culture—from military history to sports, nature, biographies, and more. Browse them all at mnhs.org/shop.



3

HEAR A FREE HISTORY TALK
Join historian Krista Finstad Hanson at **History Lounge: The Japanese & Japanese American Experience During WWII Minnesota**, Feb 18, Minnesota History Center, St. Paul.



4

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Oratorical Contest finals looking good

American Legion State Oratorical Contest finals are set! They will be held at the Anoka and Osseo American Legion Posts on Saturday, Feb. 29.

At this time, it appears all 10 districts will have a contestant. This is good news for our Oratorical Contest, which is a very important part of our Americanism Pillar.

Our American Legion Family Sweetheart Rally will be at Montgomery Post 79 on Saturday, Feb. 8, social begins at 11 a.m., meal at noon and program to follow. Thank you to the Department Auxiliary leadership for planning this event.

If a post is considering turning in their charter, procedures need to be followed. The first step would be for a post to contact their district leadership (commander, membership director,

Commander's Column

Mark Dvorak



vice commander).

They can recommend a plan of action that could include different suggestions. My experience in past situations, with various posts, is to involve all membership for a roundtable meeting to discuss the future of said post. In all situations that I've been involved with or are aware of, other post members have stepped up and accepted leadership positions and the post was revitalized.

In some cases, it took several months of District leadership to stay involved with the new Post leadership to help make it a success story. If necessary, the District leadership will get

Department leadership involved.

Membership continues to be ahead of last year at this time. The National Commander's Tour is Feb. 17-19. Please try to attend one of his stops. A complete schedule and contacts were in the December Legionnaire, January Legionnaire and this month's Legionnaire. See Page 13. For God and Country.

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



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Four chaplains went down with the ship

On Feb. 3, it will be the 77-year anniversary of the sinking of the troop ship SS Dorchester.

According to Wikipedia, the "Four Chaplains," also referred to as the "Immortal Chaplains" or the "Dorchester Chaplains," were four World War II Chaplains who gave their lives to save other civilian and military personnel as the troop ship SS Dorchester sank on Feb. 3, 1943. The SS Dorchester was a civilian liner converted for military service in World War II as a War Shipping Administration troop transport. She was able to carry slightly more than 900 military passengers and crew.

The ship left New York on Jan. 23, 1943, traveling to Greenland, carrying approximately 900 passengers, as part of a convoy of three ships escorted by Coast Guard cutters — Tampa, Escanaba and Comanche.

During the early morning hours of Feb. 3 the vessel was torpedoed by the German submarine U-223 off Newfoundland

Chaplain's Corner

Betty Jass



in the North Atlantic. The chaplains helped the other soldiers board lifeboats and gave up their own life jackets when the supply ran out. The chaplains joined arms, said prayers and sang hymns as they went down with the ship.

The impact of the chaplain's story was deep, with many memorials and coverage in the media. Each of the four chaplains was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Purple Heart. The chaplains were nominated for the Medal of Honor but were found ineligible as they had not engaged in combat with the enemy. Instead, Congress created a medal for them, with the same weight and importance as the Medal of Honor.

Some people may wonder why we remember these four chaplains and their sacrifice. We

honor their unselfish sacrifice because of their dedication and love for their fellow man. They didn't ask those they helped for anything in return. Their actions continue to speak louder than words.

How about you or me? We can help each other as we go through life by being patient, being kind and being there for those in their time of need. This need could be helping someone by loading their groceries in the rain or holding their hand when they are scared, lonely or sad. We can help each other daily by caring for our fellow man.

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

The 2020 Veterans Creative Arts Competition is on

ST. CLOUD — The St. Cloud VA Medical Center is seeking local veteran entries for the 2020 National Veterans Creative Arts Competition, an annual competitive event that provides veterans receiving treatment at VA facilities the opportunity to

participate in creative self-expression in art, creative writing, dance, drama and music.

Art division entries will be accepted through Feb. 21. Entries in all other divisions will be accepted through Mar. 6. To learn how to enter the competition,

visit the St. Cloud VA homepage at: stcloud.va.gov or contact Madge Scherer at 320-252-1670 Ext. 7336.

The Veterans Art Show is 12:30-6:30 p.m. Feb. 26, and 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Feb. 27, at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center.

Winter is hard for motorcycle therapy

Greetings Legion Family, I hope everyone is keeping their sanity in these cold months. I guess we have to go through cold winters in order to enjoy the spring.

It is especially hard for those of us who rely on our motorcycles for therapy. Keep your head up though, riding season will be here before you know it.

In the meantime, if you need to vent, or need someone to talk to, we have a great Legion Family that is here for you. You can call me anytime at 612-598-0419 if you need

Legion Riders

Paul Hassing



someone to talk to.

Please take some time to reach out to fellow veterans and their families. We tend to shut ourselves in over the winter, and don't like to ask for help. If you haven't seen someone in a while, give them a call and see if they need anything. Sometimes just a friendly voice can make a big difference. I'm hoping to see everyone

soon. When you do see me, say hello. Love to you all.

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

Legion membership chart as of Jan. 23

District	2020 Goal	Total 2019	Total 2020	Weeks Gain	Total Posts	Goal Posts	% Of Goal	
District 1	8,149	8,091	7,373	111	58	5	90.48%	7,492
District 2	6,497	6,413	5,720	31	84	10	88.04%	5,997
District 3	11,021	10,956	9,974	79	65	11	90.50%	9,995
District 4	2,136	2,118	1,925	28	18	4	90.12%	1,961
District 5	2,346	2,325	1,948	23	23	1	83.03%	2,061
District 6	10,891	10,820	9,696	99	71	11	89.03%	10,052
District 7	5,778	5,702	5,140	27	76	10	88.96%	5,309
District 8	3,788	3,748	3,337	16	40	4	88.09%	3,446
District 9	6,124	6,059	5,422	33	65	14	88.54%	5,626
District 10	9,108	9,054	8,075	71	54	9	88.66%	8,171
District 11	3,655	1,897	1,716	47	2	0	46.95%	1,709
Totals	69,493	67,183	60,326	565	556	79	86.81%	61,819

Same Date Last Year

Do Legion, VFW posts with buildings know they can get a property-tax reduction?

Andru Peters, commander of Wabasha County American Legion and former legislative chair for District 1 of Minnesota, is pushing state government to pass a bill giving 100 percent property-tax relief to posts that own buildings.

He also wants posts of The American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars throughout the state to know they can file for a reduction in property taxes under present law.

Posts, to be sure, operate their buildings and business ventures independently of the district, department and national levels of The American Legion and do not have to take advantage of the property tax exemption.

The exemption also applies to buildings belonging to other congressionally chartered veterans service organizations, such as Veterans of Foreign Wars and Amvets.

In May 2017, Gov. Mark Dayton signed the omnibus tax bill with language that provided a 33 percent cut in property taxes, pretty much from a rate of 3 percent to 1 percent of assessed value. The reduction was slated to take effect Jan. 1, 2018.

However, posts largely were unaware of it, as were local governments. Peters said that, in District 1, some units of government were aware of the new law and adhered to it. Some were unaware and would not comply, even when told of the law, he said. Yet others, he added, offered 1 percent but the assessor had valued the property at higher values, negating the tax-cutting intent of the law. The example he gave was that Millville Post 579 experienced a 135 percent increase in assessed value, which impacted its insurance costs, too.

But most local governments were unaware of it. Peters said he inquired among state government agencies. The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, indeed, told the Department of Revenue about the new law, but the Department of Revenue, he found, failed to inform the county treasurers of the exemption.

In 2017, Peters had testified on the House and Senate versions of the bill, and he is back in St. Paul again in 2020.

Like last time, Peters is operating separately from The American Legion Department of Minnesota because it is a post-level effort.

And like last time, he is working with Rep. Bob Dettmer, R-Forest Lake, and Sen. Bruce Anderson, R-Buffalo. They have crafted two bills. The first exempts posts of all property taxes on buildings they own. The second provides an exemption to building owners who lease to posts. If the post location is in, for

example, a strip mall, the exemption would be a percentage of the building equal to the percent of space taken by the post.

If passed, Peters hopes the measure assists posts with keeping community charitable activities that come from their business operations going.

Dettmer is the minority lead on the House Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy Division. Anderson chairs the Senate Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy Committee.

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Phone: 651-291-1800, 866-259-9163

Fax: 651-291-1057

Email: tengstrom@mnlegion.org

Web: mnlegion.org

Editor: Director of Communications

Tim Engstrom

Board of Publication: President Mark Dvorak, New Prague; Vice President Don Amundson, Blue Earth; Secretary Randy Tesdahl, Elk River; Treasurer Bill Goede, Plainview; Darrel Redepnering, Fridley; Joe Bayer, Minneapolis; Carroll Partridge, Oakdale; Paul Edwards, Brainerd; Dennis Henkemeyer, Bagley; Patti Coleman, Circle Pines; Mary Kuperus, New London

What's happening?

Sons of the American Legion to gather in March

The Sons of the American Legion

Department of Minnesota will hold its annual Spring Conference on March 13 and 14, hosted by East Grand Forks Squadron 157, 1009 Central Ave. NW, East Grand Forks.

The Finance Committee meets at 7 p.m. March 13, and the Detachment

Executive Committee meets at 8 p.m. The general session begins at 9 a.m. March 14.

Roundtables ready for February

ST. PAUL—Agent Orange is the topic of discussion for the February gathering

of the Vietnam War Roundtable. Local veterans and experts will share the lasting impact of the defoliant chemical.

The topic spurred great interest last year, according to the roundtable's website. The Vietnam War Roundtable meets at 7 p.m. Feb. 17 at Concordia University in Buetow Auditorium on Hamline Avenue south of Interstate 94. The Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World

War II History Roundtable will feature James Scott, author of "Rampage," in a lecture titled "Return to the Philippines: The Battle of Manila."

Veterans will discuss the MacArthur pledge to return, and the bloody urban fighting in Manila that resulted from the Japanese defense. It takes place at 7 p.m. Feb. 11 at the Minnesota

Continued on Page 7

Taps



Atkinson, Kenneth W., 96, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 10, 2020. He was a 74-year member of Red Wing Post 54.

Boje, Bruce F., 71, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 1, 2019. He was a member of Chanhassen Post 580.

Burdette Wohlfeil, 102, Army veteran of World War II who served in Hawaii, died Dec. 13, 2019. He was a 40-year member of Eyota Post 551.

Chick, Richard, 88, Army National Guard veteran for 20 years, including Vietnam era, died Jan. 3, 2020. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

Connell III, Wade Hampton, 78, Air National Guard veteran, died Oct. 21, 2019. He was a member of West Duluth Post 71. (Post 1982?)

Cooper, Paul H., 86, Navy veteran of Korea, died Jan. 7, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Dorn, Victor W., Army veteran of World War II, died Dec. 23, 2019. He was a member of Minneapolis Post 504.

Driscoll, Richard, 84, Army veteran of Korea stationed in Germany, died Jan. 1, 2020. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Driscoll, Richard, 84, Army veteran who served in Germany during the occupation period, died Jan. 1, 2020. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Elder, Leslie G. "Les", 74, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 21, 2019. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Erkkila, Doris, 95, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 6, 2020. She was a 72-year member of Cloquet Post 262.

Fahrenholtz, Ervin, 87, Army veteran of Korea, died Dec. 3, 2019. He was a member of Faribault Post 43.

Ferkingstad, Edward John, 87, Navy veteran of Korea, died Jan. 4, 2020. He was a member of Caledonia Post 191.

Firl, Alvin H., 92, Navy veteran of World War II and Korea, died Dec. 31, 2019. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

Fischer, Howard, 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Nov. 24, 2019. He served in Germany with the 501st Armored Medical Company as a radio operator. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

Fish, James M. Sr., 97, Navy veteran of World War II, died Dec. 26, 2019. He served aboard the USS New Mexico battleship. He was a member of Warroad Post 25 for 76 years.

Gergen, David, Army veteran of the Vietnam War who served in Alaska, died Dec. 16, 2019. He was a member of Eyota Post 551.

Gibson, Earl D., 91, Minnesota National Guard veteran, died Dec. 26, 2019. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Gjevre, John Esten, 88, Navy veteran of Korea, died Dec. 19, 2019. He was a 56-year member of Hackensack Post 202.

Hansen, Mark, 71, Air Force veteran of Vietnam War, died Dec. 29, 2019. He was a member of Faribault Post 43.

Hargreaves, Alan I., 83, Army veteran of Korea, died Dec. 7, 2020. He was a member of Richfield Post 435.

Hoff, Robert, 89, Air Force veteran of Korea, died Jan. 9, 2020. In the service, he was a radar repairman. He was a member of Ashby Post 357.

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

Jensen, James, 72, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 3, 2019. He was a member of Tyler Post 185.

Jenson, Donald Nile, 86, Army veteran of Korean era, died Dec. 12, 2019. He served in the 55th Transportation Company and drove M-50 transport trucks in France. He was a member of Twin Valley Post 431.

Jewell, Eugene B., 88, Air Force veteran who served in Africa during the Korean War, died Nov. 24, 2019. He was a member of Pine City Post 51.

Johnson, Louvaine "Sonny", 80, Army National Guard veteran of Vietnam era, died Jan. 14, 2020. He was a member of Tyler Post 185.

Joyce, William T., 83, Air Force veteran of Korean War, died Oct. 4, 2019. He was a member of Roseville Post 542.

Julian, Charles Jr. "Chuck", 94, Army veteran of World War II (Japan) and of the Korean War, died Jan. 7, 2020. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Kiel, Marvin "Marv", 91, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 3, 2020. He was stationed on the USS Gen. J.C. Breckenridge, USS LST-102 and the USS Jason. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

Obituaries

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

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

Kosel, Marcel J., 88, Air Force veteran of Korea, died Oct. 16, 2019. He was a 17-year volunteer at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

Koudela, Richard, 92, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 18, 2019. He was a 64-year member of Lowry Post 253.

Kreger, John F., 78, Air Force veteran of Korea, died Dec. 12, 2019. He was a member of Chanhassen Post 580.

Kutscher, Walter, 84, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 13, 2019. He was a member of Osseo Post 172.

Laabs, Wilbert, 69, Air Force veteran stationed in Korea during the Vietnam War, died Jan. 16, 2020. He was a member of Gaylord Post 433.

Lehman, Charles A. "Moe", 72, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 3, 2019. He was a member of Mountain Lake Post 389.

Leonard, Paul, 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 19, 2020. He was a member of Alexandria Post 87.

Lohrenz, Richard "Dick", 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 30, 2019. He was a member of Mountain Lake Post 389.

Luedeke, Reinhardt O. "Reiny", 82, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 3, 2020. He served 20 years as commander of Parkers Prairie Post 219.

MacKissock, Douglas G., 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 26, 2019. He was twice awarded the Purple Heart. He was a member of Little Falls Post 46.

Martin, Kenneth J., 89, Marine veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 18, 2019. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

Miller, Richard Joseph, 74, Army veteran of the Vietnam era stationed in Germany, died Dec. 29, 2019. He was a member of Arcade-Phalen Post 577 in St. Paul.

Mueller, Larry, 71, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War and the Vietnam theater, died Dec. 22, 2019. He was a member of Gaylord Post 433.

Mueller, Larry, 71, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Dec. 22, 2019. He was a member of Gaylord Post 433.

Muwissen, Robert J., 88, Army veteran of Korea, died Dec. 8, 2019. He was a member of Chanhassen Post 580.

Myhre, Robert "Bob" E., 83, Air Force veteran of Korea, died Jan. 2, 2020. He was a member of Caledonia Post 191.

Pavek, Robert George, 96, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Dec. 15, 2019. He was a 72-year member of Winona Post 9.

Pemberton, Robert J., 79, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 23, 2019. He was a member of Chanhassen Post 580.

Phaff, Bruce A., 75, Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, died Jan. 14, 2020. He was a personnel specialist on the USS Waldron. He was a member of New Ulm Post 132.

Phillipp, Michael, 69, Marine veteran of Vietnam War, died Nov. 4, 2019. He was a member of St. Joseph Post 328.

Pitzen, Werner "Skip", 91, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 23, 2019. He was a member of Pine City Post 51.

Popiel, Harry A., 77, Air Force veteran of Vietnam, died Nov. 4, 2019. He reached the rank of major. He was a member of Waseca Post 228.

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

Riley, Valentine L., 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 29, 2019. He was a 62-year member of Eden Valley Post 381.

Runnigen, Richard, 89, Army veteran of 20 years and of Korean and Vietnam wars, died Jan. 9, 2020. He served many years as the color guard commander for Ashby Post 357.

Russ, Albert B., 82, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 19, 2019. He was past commander of Blue Earth Post 68.

Saling, Albert Jr., 85, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 23, 2019. He was a member of Cambridge Post 290.

Schow, Johnnie "Ray", 90, Army veteran of Korean War, died Dec. 29, 2019. He was a member of Twin Valley Post 431.

Schultz, Gilbert E. "Gil", 87, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 28, 2019. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

Schulz, Bob, 89, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 24, 2019. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

Schwartzhoff, Theodore "Bob", 90, Army veteran of Korea, died Dec. 28, 2019. He was a member of Caledonia Post 191.

Severtson, Warren J., 88, Navy veteran of Korea, died Jan. 2, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Severtson, Warren J., 88, Navy veteran of Korean era, died Jan. 2, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Sherman, Yale, 89, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 14, 2020. He was a 45-year member and past commander of Bloomington Post 550.

Siem, Verle A., 93, Navy veteran of Philippines during World War II, died Dec. 17, 2019. He was a member of St. James Post 33.

Siewert, John "Zippy", 85, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 8, 2020. He served as a cook in the war. He was a member of Gaylord Post 433, serving with the honor guard and the Korean War Last Man's Club.

Simpson, Robert "Bob", 80, Army veteran of Vietnam War, died Jan. 1, 2020. He served as a counterintelligence agent in Vietnam and on Okinawa, then in the Army Reserve as part of Operation Cuban Refugee in 1980. He was a member of St. Paul Post 450.

Sirek, Lawrence L. "Larry", 84, Army veteran, died Dec. 20, 2019. He was a member of New Prague Post 45.

Skophammer, Duane T., 87, Army veteran of Korean era, died Dec. 3, 2019. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Skophammer, Duane Thomas, 87, Army veteran of Korean War, died Dec. 3, 2019. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

Smith, Audreene J., 98, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 10, 2020. She was a nurse lieutenant who served in Central Europe. She was a 42-year member of New Richland Post 75.

Swanson, Lenord J., 91, Army and Minnesota National Guard veteran of Korea, died Dec. 16, 2019. He was a member of Thief River Falls Post 117.

Swedberg, Robert "Bob", 92, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 5, 2020. He was a member of St. Peter Post 37.

Tebben, Jerald K., 80, Army veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 25, 2019. He was a member of Raymond Post 420.

Teigen, Clinton Eugene, 86, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 25, 2019. He was a member of Austin Post 91.

Tyler, Douglas O., 76, Air Force veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 25, 2019. He was a member of Chanhassen Post 580.

Vander Lugt, Peter H., 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 21, 2019. He served one year in Korea building roads and bridges in demilitarized zones. He was a member of the Edgerton Legion Post 42.

Vidden, Harding Chester, 97, Army Air Corps veteran of World War II, died Dec. 17, 2019. He was a flight engineer and top turret gunner on the B-17 Flying Fortress in the 483rd Bomb.

Viestenz, Wallace E., 83, Navy veteran of Korea, died Jan. 10, 2020. He was a 43-year member of Winona Post 9, part of the burial detail and recognized as Legionnaire of the Year in 1989.

Vold, Ronald Lowell, 77, Army National Guard veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 14, 2019. He was a past commander of Graceville Post 297 and served on the drill squad.

Wellman, Le Roy, 92, Army veteran of the Korean War, died Jan. 5, 2020. He was a member of St. James Post 33.

Wheaton, Paul James, 76, Navy and Navy Reserve veteran of Vietnam, died Dec. 7, 2019. He retired as a chief petty officer. He was active in the honor guard and parades as a member of Houston Post 423.

Yennie, Lyle William, 94, Navy veteran of World War II, died Jan. 9, 2020. He was a member of the American Legion for more than 50 years and a member of Pine Island Post 184.

Zejdlik, 92, Army veteran of World War II and Korea, died Dec. 28, 2019. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

Zejdlik, Bernard, 92, Army veteran of World War II and Korea, died Dec. 28, 2019. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

American Legion Auxiliary

Judd, Carol A., 63, died Dec. 26, 2019. She was active with Milaca Unit 178 and the Milaca Airport Fly-in Breakfast every August.

Obitua

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The VA's biggest challenge is the prevention of veteran suicides

As we start a new year, the VA's top priorities become etched in stone. Though the plan to execute one of them is still on the drawing board. The VA's biggest challenge of preventing veteran suicides has proven to be one the administration continues to struggle handling on their own.

Even though federal funding has continued to increase in FY2020 — including \$9.4 billion for mental health services, \$426 million above 2019 and \$222 million for suicide prevention outreach, \$15.6 million above 2019 — it remains to be seen how the VA executes its plan to eradicate not just the VA's priority but America's priority of ending veteran suicides.

As VA spends this increase in funding to hire more staff, such as mental health providers, suicide prevention coordinators and suicide outreach specialists, it also is using a community-effort approach. The VA's is doing this using its recently launched S.A.V.E. online suicide prevention training video in collaboration with PsychArmor Institute, a national nonprofit providing online education and support to those who work with, live with or care for service members, veterans and military and veteran families.

SAVE — which stands for "signs," "ask," "validate," and "encourage" and "expedite" — offers simple steps that anyone can take when talking with Veterans who are at risk for suicide. VA's strategy offers guidance to VA's employees and partners including other federal agencies, state and local governments, health care systems, and community organizations so as a nation, we can prevent veteran suicide.

Congress has recognized it may take a community effort more than just VA training partnering agencies and organizations to recognize and make referrals to VA. A controversial bill is aimed for the president's desk that would use VA federal funding to provide grants to private organizations working to combat veteran suicide in their communities. The bill sparked controversy between

VA & Rehabilitation

Jeremy Wolfsteller



both parties arguing over how much oversight the grants required, and which groups could be eligible to receive them and that this could be another step closer to privatizing the Veterans Health Administration. The VA secretary lobbied against the bill, stating his agency should be the one providing the services.

The question many of us here in Minnesota have for top VA officials is where is the increase funding in the VA's Vets Centers Program? Has the uniqueness of the program's complete separation from big VA's bureaucracy now kept them out of VA's mission plan of ending veteran suicides?

For readers unfamiliar with VA's best-kept secret of its Vets Center Program, they were established by Congress in 1979 out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam-era vets were still experiencing readjustment problems. Vet Centers are community-based readjustment counseling centers and part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The mission of VA's 300 Vet Centers is to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach and referral services to eligible veterans in order to help them make a satisfying post-war readjustment to civilian life.

This is all done confidentially without anything entered into a veterans electronic health record. Whether it's the stigma of receiving mental health services, a mental health diagnosis in their VA record or just a place where veterans can go for camaraderie, the Vets Centers have proven to be a choice of many veterans that are searching for mental health, counseling and readjustment services.

The problem here in Minnesota is we only have three Vets Centers of which two are in the Twin Cities area and the other is in Duluth. With a state that has over 308,000 veterans and one of the largest National Guard units deploying in support of

Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, VA has not provided the state with another Vets Center. Being as rural as the state is, many veterans unfortunately are not receiving the services the Vet Centers provide.

Over the last decade the VA has added mobile vet centers to its flagship of services, but there has been much criticism to this as it hasn't shown to be a successful way of spending its funding to reach more veterans in rural areas. After all, as a combat veteran myself, I wouldn't want to enter a 30-foot motorhome with a billboard across the side that indicates "I need help" sitting in my local community parking lot — but that's just my opinion.

What VA needs to do is look at the way they allocate Vets Centers per veteran in each state. The American Legion Department of Minnesota took this on back in 2010 via resolution with no success and, yes, it's time we as VSOs work together to give it another go.

There's no question that our three Vet Centers in Minnesota do a great job with what they have but with the demand in services, overworked staff contribute to burnout. We need to support their mission and the mission of combating veteran suicides and although there is no single effort like Vet Centers that will be the answer, adding more could prove to save lives.

Learn about Vet Centers: <https://www.vetcenter.va.gov/>
VA's Suicide Prevention: https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/index.asp

Jeremy Wolfsteller is the Department of Minnesota service officer. His email is jwolfsteller@mnlegion.org.

The issue of Vet Centers in Minnesota lost momentum — but now has it back

Guest Column

Phil Ringstrom



My father signed me up for The American Legion in 1975. He said veteran service organizations were advocates for veterans and will help them out when in need. My dad's membership was with Fergus Falls VFW Post 612. He enjoyed stints as post commander and chaplain.

My involvement with The American Legion began in earnest when the Department of Minnesota Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee, led by Jourdan Sullivan of Underwood, a Legionnaire and Vietnam veteran, visited the Sioux Falls Vet Center. I was the "team leader," now referred to as "director."

The Minnesota VA&R Committee has visited Vet Centers ever since. My active role as a Legionnaire began when State Commander Al Davis appointed me to the VA&R Committee with Tom Newman as department service officer. The committee was chaired by Tom Burau, a Legionnaire from Fergus Falls.

I recall Newman bringing forth the nomination of Iraq War veteran Jeremy Wolfsteller to be hired as assistant DSO, and my pride grew for the organization gaining young veteran leaders. Newman immediately focused on readjustment needs of veterans and their families and held a town hall meeting with Sioux Falls VA Medical Center addressing needs of southwestern Minnesota veterans.

Time has passed. Priorities change. Yet foreign wars and deployments continue.

On April 15, 2011, the Standing Committee of the Minnesota Department Rehabilitation Committee put forth a proposal to expand Vet Centers in Minnesota, complete with a resolution, now known as "The Document."

As time marches on, so do members, leaders and priorities, yet the continual need for additional Vet Centers hasn't. Last spring with the assistance from Mike Revard, vice chairman of the United Veterans Leadership Council, I presented The Document and

sought support from members of congressional staff and attending VSO representatives.

Specifically, one individual stands out that provided energy and encouragement to move forward, Tommy Johnson of Bloomington Post 550. He also is known as "Two Puttee, led by Jourdan Sullivan of Underwood, a Legionnaire and Vietnam veteran, visited the Sioux Falls Vet Center. I was the "team leader," now referred to as "director."

As the front page of January edition of The Minnesota Legionnaire indicates, support for this critical clinical and readjustment need for veterans and their families is unanimous.

Former Department Service Officer Tom Newman authored The Document and advocated expansion of Vet Centers in Minnesota to President Barack Obama in person.

Meanwhile, I served as chairman of the VA&R Committee until 2015 and continued to push for additional Vet Centers — yet failed to elicit momentum.

With the assistance and encouragement from Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Legislative Director Ben Johnson, we have regained momentum.

Brad Lindsay, deputy commissioner for the MDVA, recently shared with the current working group the results of an Amherst H. Wilder Foundation study commissioned by the Minnesota State Legislature. The data from this study supports the Commanders' Task Force's request for Vet Center expansion plus the urgency of the need.

I am hopeful, as retired Minneapolis VA Director Tom Mullon stated in last month's Legionnaire, sometimes the federal Department of

Veterans Affairs needs a little push. The legislative agenda from the CTF is a glowing example of Minnesota's VSOs advocating for all veterans and families.

Plenty of time has passed since the writing of The Document — wars continue with deployments, physical and emotional trauma continues, families face disruptions, lives are shortened (two combat engineers with the 82nd Airborne were killed in Afghanistan in mid-January, the first two losses of the new decade) — and still veterans have to fill out means tests, enrollment paperwork just to talk with someone about the natural consequences of war.

"It's a Great Day to be a Veteran!" is one excellent slogan. It is followed by: "Serve our Comrades in Arms!" Hopefully my World War II father's words ring true that we are "advocates for veterans in need!"

I can proudly say that my father was so correct about the VSOs! Let's, together, get this Vet Center funding accomplished. In fact, the funds are already approved, so it's a matter of the money coming to our state. When we run the numbers, Minnesota is the only state left behind. Let our federal politicians know that Minnesota — especially Greater Minnesota — is not getting the same level of service every other state in the Union is receiving.

Phil Ringstrom is the post service officer for Sartell Post 277. He served as a staff nurse, nurse manager and staff assistant for clinical affairs to the director and chief of staff at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center and also as team leader for Vet Centers in Sioux Falls and Duluth.

Detachment commander

Dave Vulcan



Greetings to the American Legion Family.

I would like to say that I have attended three week-ends of Mid-Winter rallies and spoke about how well the Sons are doing in membership and all the other programs that we sponsor.

I also have talked about my projects. The first project is very close to my heart, The John Zgoda Memorial Disabled Veterans Deer Hunt. Fifty percent of funds donated to my project will go to the deer hunt, the other 50 percent of my project will go to Legionville School Patrol Camp for putting in a new ceiling in the new dining hall.

If you are using gambling

funds, please make checks payable to Legionville and on the memo line please put "SAL Commander Vulcan's project: ceiling."

Mail all checks to Commander Vulcan at 42416 502nd St., North Mankato, MN 56003

I hope you have a great month, and we will all see everybody at the Spring Conference in East Grand Forks in March. (See brief on Page 5.) Thank you.

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

The SAL Update:

Update on Child Welfare Foundation

The Detachment goal for 2020 is a total donation of \$8,226. We have donated \$4,605 or 56 percent of that goal with a donation per capita of 56 cents per member. As we approach Spring Conference, as well as the month of Children and Youth (April), think about what you can do to make a donation.

Sons for Kids aprons are available again! Send a check-plus \$20 donation with how many aprons desired to:

The American Legion c/o Child Welfare Foundation P. O. Box 1055 Indianapolis, IN 46206

News from the Sons of the American Legion

District	2020 Goal	Total 2019	Total 2020	Week's Gain	Total Squads	% Of Goal	
District 1	1,789	1,805	1,370	288	41	76.58%	1,348
District 2	1,334	1,333	925	108	34	69.34%	961
District 3	2,066	2,045	1,511	203	36	73.14%	1,476
District 4	375	370	252	39	7	67.20%	300
District 5	382	386	204	5	7	53.40%	231
District 6	1,578	1,566	1,219	167	33	77.25%	1,200
District 7	1,016	1,029	720	277	22	70.87%	709
District 8	554	547	428	115	16	77.26%	409
District 9	846	830	538	110	18	63.59%	513
District 10	1,653	1,651	1,070	262	34	64.73%	937
District 11	3	2	7	0	2	233.33%	0
Totals	11,596	11,564	8,244	1,574	250	71.09%	8,084

Department goal: 11,596

Current members: 8,244

Membership update

SAL membership for 2019 for the Detachment of MN ended with a 100.408 percent or 11,565 members. Congratulations to all for your hard work in renewals and recruiting. You have made a difference. That placed us in 39th place in the nation, and sixth place in the Central

Region. At the National level, the SAL reached a 101.218 percent with 375,540 members.

For 2020, we have 8,226 turned in at National for 70.020 percent surpassing our 60 percent target goal for January. Our renewal rate is 55.75 percent. As we approach our next target of 75 percent on Feb. 12,

as yourself, "What can I do to increase renewals, and gain new members?"

The 2019-2020 Individual Recruitment award forms are available online. Recruit 5 new members to the SAL, complete the form, and mail it in. Once the new members are confirmed, you will get the recruitment pin.

Continued from Page 1

Before he was in the Army, he rode a skateboard and was known for going too fast and known for plowing into kids. He garnered the nickname "Fr8 Train." Now, people still called him that, but it was a slower locomotive.

The VA transferred his out-patient care to the Minneapolis hospital, and he would stop for visits at the spinal cord clinic and the polytrauma unit.

What next? It's the question all service members face.

His family had contemplated it, too. His stepfather was friends with Bob Schoenberger, who worked at Normandale Community College as what was called a "global career development facilitator." Schoenberger recommended Jeremy enroll. In August, Wolfsteller did.

He could've paid for college with the G.I. Bill program or Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment benefits. He opted for Voc Rehab and pursued his general credits with an interest in sociology.

At the same time, a new law meant that colleges statewide were establishing veteran resource centers for their students. Normandale officials asked Wolfsteller if he would launch theirs. He would be a paid student counselor. He agreed.

"Basically, it was a sign above a desk, and I sat there between classes," he said.

He would assist veterans asking about the G.I. Bill, Voc Rehab, National Guard tuition assistance and other benefits. In spring 2008, he asked the dean of students for a more private space, and the veterans were given a space in the administrative offices, and Wolfsteller and the college's staff members who oversaw his efforts set out to make it a one-stop shop for all veterans benefits and other issues veterans encountered, like getting into college in the first place or gaining employment.

He researched things like using the Minnesota G.I. Bill, enrolling in VA health care, taking prerequisite college exams. He sought fliers on just about any veteran issues.

Another student veteran, Heather Larson, came along and began volunteering at the center. It would be the first time the two worked together, but not the last.

By fall, they had a pretty good



Jeremy Wolfsteller has an arm tattoo that memorializes Spc. Hoby Bradfield and PFC Eric Woods, two soldiers who saved his life in Tal Afar, Iraq, though they themselves died in a different battle two weeks later.

veterans resource center, and Normandale was experiencing high veteran enrollment and Wolfsteller and Larson were making names for the school.

Normandale hosted a veteran-focused conference for members of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system that fall, and Wolfsteller gave a seminar on best practices for veterans resource centers.

In fact, he got Minnesota Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Clark Dyrud to speak at the conference. How?

He simply called Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

When Minnesota had a welcome-home parade for

Wolfsteller in December 2005, Pawlenty said to call him if he needed anything.

He opted to use that favor, called the Governor's Office and made his pitch. He got a return call from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. Dyrud pledged to attend.

The staff person who oversaw Normandale's veterans center, Ken Bursaw, and other staff were impressed.

In spring 2009, Wolfsteller took Schoenberger's course on career development at the old Ford plant in St. Paul.

At the same time, The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

worked with Normandale to offer a certification course for the people in its veterans employment program. The program certified specialists who worked with disabled veterans to find work and specialists who work with employers to hire veterans.

Schoenberger asked Wolfsteller if he wanted to take the certification, if DEED's top veterans employment expert, Jim Finley, allowed it. Finley did.

Wolfsteller graduated with his Associate of Arts and went to work at Normandale.

Based in Bloomington, John Klatt was one of the specialists who worked with veterans.

"Hey, Fr8 Train," Klatt told Wolfsteller. "I got something you might be interested in."

It was a job with The American Legion as the assistant department service officer, working with veterans out of an office at the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis. After two interviews, then-Department Service Officer Tom Newman hired him. Wolfsteller started in March 2010 and was promoted to department service officer in November 2015.

When he came to the VA, some concerned Legion members wondered whether being in a hospital environment full-time might be a challenge, if it brought back difficult memories. Wolfsteller said he had been in hospitals long enough already that it wasn't an issue. He connects with the patients because he has been one himself.

Wolfsteller began researching how to help veterans with their service-connected disability claims or pensions.

He also got to know programs The American Legion offers. Two of them are:

- Operation Comfort Warriors: This program purchases and distributes goods to wounded service members in military hospitals, VA hospitals, transition units and nearby communities. Typically, the items are considered nonessential by the government. For instance, a facility housing multiple recovering troops might need exercise equipment or an individual soldier might benefit from an iPad or laptop to access the online needs of modern life.
- Temporary Financial Assistance: This grant program is aimed at helping children by assisting struggling, Legion-eligible veterans maintain a stable home environment. It can aid with medical care, medications, dental, hospitalization and dietary needs. It also can assist with shelter, food, utilities and even clothing.

No two days are the same. Every day he provides services to veterans, and every day is a different service: Advocating claims, bridging financial hardships, navigating health care, addressing homelessness, working through service-discharge upgrades, among other duties. He also sits on VA advisory panels and provides feedback to hospital officials.

In other words, Wolfsteller interacts with the people at the top, the middle and the bottom of the system.

"I am the guy in your corner, making sure you get to the right people and what the steps are," he said.

Other times, he is just someone to talk to.

"If a veteran wants to vent, I am here for that, too."

With the Department of Minnesota's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee, he performs site visits and federal and state facilities around Minnesota, asks pertinent questions and produces reports. Those reports are posted at mnlegion.org.

"It provides the opportunity for veterans to understand the big picture," Wolfsteller said.

In March 2016, he encouraged Heather Larson, a veteran who had helped Wolfsteller at Normandale, to apply for a new position, administrative assistant for the department's veterans rehabilitation effort. She works at the Bishop Henry Whipple Building.

Wolfsteller's story has a lot of full circles. Reconnecting with Larson was one of them.

Another full circle — and the largest of them all — is how that fateful battle in northern Iraq led to him helping veterans in Minnesota.

"My passion comes from the two soldiers who saved my life," Wolfsteller said. "They gave me a reason to live."



The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors has allowed Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller to assist wounded soldiers at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center with comfort items, such as iPad Minis or Samsung tablets while going through long stays. It helps them take their minds away from worries. Another example is giving them weight sets to take home so they can continue therapy.

Continued from Page 5

History Center in St. Paul. There is a \$6 parking fee.

Speaker Ken Martin will talk about "The 4th Wisconsin Infantry and the Men of Western Wisconsin" at the St. Croix Valley Civil War Roundtable. The meeting begins at 5:30 p.m. with a social hour, a buffet meal at 6 p.m., followed by the presentation at 7 p.m., at the Lowell Inn, 102 N. Second St., in Stillwater.

Curling bonspiels planned up north

BEMIDJI — Bemidji Post 14 will host its 68th annual Men's Curling Bonspiel on Feb. 14, 15 and 16 and the Mixed (2 men and 2 women) Curling Bonspiel on March 20 and 21. Both are set up for the novice curler; however, one experienced or league curler is allowed per team. Entry fee for the Men's Bonspiel in February is \$180 per team and the Mixed in March is \$170. Entry

fee for both bonspiels include meals and a three-game guarantee.

Post 14 is challenging other Posts to send a team for a fun time and meet other Legion curlers.

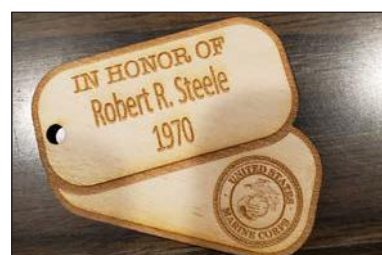
For more information contact Bob Aitken at 218-766-0121, email jkaitken@paulbunyan.net or Claude Sand at 218-820-4839, email claudes@paulbunyan.net.

Legal Clinics slated

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

- Tuesday, Feb. 4, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center's Flag Atrium Balcony Room on the second floor (2S-114).

- Thursday, March 5, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Anoka County Government Center, 2100 Third Ave., Room 237, Anoka.



Post makes bar top with wooden dog tags

PINE RIVER — Pine River Post 613 has remodeled most of its club and came up with a memorial bar top with lasered wood to look like dog tags, said Commander Terry Steele.

"We have sold the dog tags for the cost of making the tag and building our bar top," he said. "We have sold 160 tags in three months and are still selling them."

Steele said the Post would like to share the bar top with the rest of Minnesota.

To purchase a dog tag, email Steele at tman4867@gmail.com.

St. Cloud VA goes red for women

ST. CLOUD — Every February during American Heart Month, the Women Veterans Program at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center joins the American Heart Association's efforts to raise awareness and provide education about heart disease and stroke among women veterans.

Women veterans are invited to join the effort by learning more about heart disease while creating a heart-health-themed towel to take home from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Feb. 19 in the St. Cloud VA

Auditorium (Bldg. 8), 4801 Veterans Drive, in St. Cloud.

To confirm attendance, contact Amber Willert, Women Veterans Program Manager at amber.willert@va.gov, or call 320-252-1670 Ext. 6655.

Sweetheart Rally to be at Post 79

The American Legion Family Sweetheart Rally is slated to take place Saturday, Feb. 8, at Montgomery Post 79.

Social hour starts at 11 a.m., meal at noon and program to follow. Auxiliary Membership Chairwoman Sharon Thiemecke will lead the activities.

Members are encouraged to bring their sweetheart and enjoy themselves.

Post 79 is at 102 Elm Ave. SW. To reserve a meal, call the post at 507-364-7779. Lunch is \$15 and tip is included. The meal is chili or chicken dumpling soup with sandwich and dessert. The price includes coffee, milk, water. (RSVP by Feb. 5.)

Want to
XXXXX

SO HELP ME GOD



Photo by Cole Trace

American Legion St. Paul Post 599 member Lou Michaels, center, takes the oath of obligation as the commander of Jewish War Veterans on Jan. 14 at the Jewish Community Center, 1375 St. Paul Ave. in St. Paul, before outgoing Department Commander Peter Nickitas, the JWV national adjutant and a St. Paul Post 406 Legionnaire. Others are being sworn in for positions within the three posts in Minnesota. There are about 150 members in the state. Members don't have to be Jewish to join JWV. They can be patron members, too. For instance, the chaplain for the three posts is Roman Catholic. The JWV was founded in 1896.

MDVA taking aim at veterans issues: courts, suicide, housing

Legislative agenda could change before session begins Feb. 11

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has been forming its legislative initiatives for the 2020 session. Opening day of the session is Feb. 11, and Veterans Day on the Hill is slated for April 20.

Though this list could change before the session launches, the MDVA, as of press time, plans to ask the state Legislature to:

- Allow the commissioner of veteran affairs, and by extension certain staff members, to use data from the homeless veteran registry to help homeless veterans secure housing. This measure could be controversial in light of the sensitive nature of data privacy. It should be noted veterans grant the waiver when signing the homeless registry, and the agency on a regular basis helps them find housing they often cannot otherwise find themselves in a market of rising rents. The Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless is seeking the same authorization for homeless people it helps find housing.

- Expand veterans courts so they are available statewide. The notion of veterans courts actually is a diversion program for veterans facing criminal charges for behavior that can be connected to their time in service, typically combat. A judge can withhold a plea and assign help. If the veteran meets the court's requirements, the judge can tear up the charges. Minnesota was a pioneer of veterans courts in 2008 and presently has the program in some districts but not all. Chief Justice Lorie Gildea has spoken in favor of expansion.

- Fund \$1 million in fiscal biennium 2020-21 and \$1.2 million in 2022-23 for preventing suicide among veterans. The MDVA would like to hire a coordinator and liaison with the goal of developing a model for suicide prevention efforts and for better understanding the gaps in Minnesota — such as how some counties have low rates



Snow covers the Minnesota State Capitol on Jan. 23.



The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is in the Veterans Service Building, 20 W. 12th St., St. Paul. The building is right across the lawn from the Capitol.

and some have high rates. The agency would work in line with the federal VA suicide-prevention efforts, too.

- Fund \$3.17 million in 2020-21 and \$6.33 million in 2022-23 to fund 150 housing vouchers for veterans who do not qualify for the HUD-VASH vouchers.

HUD-VASH is a federal rental-assistance program to help homeless veterans and their families gain housing. It is operated collaboratively through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

- Fund \$4.2 million via bonding for improving the safety and security of the veterans homes in Luverne, Silver Bay, Hastings and Fergus Falls, such as electronic locks, among other upgrades. The Legislature typically passes a bonding bill (aka capital-investments bill) in its even-numbered years.

- Fund \$10.7 million via bonding for asset preservation. The MDVA regularly requests bonding-bill assistance with maintaining its 64 buildings, altogether valued around \$311 million. Nine of them are residences for veterans.

- Fund \$100,000 via bonding for a greenhouse at the Fergus Falls Veterans Home. The residents living there already have raised nearly \$100,000 for the project.

- Permit the MDVA to employ a public relations agency. Because of the distance between St. Paul and four of the five homes it operates, the MDVA would like to rely on local agencies for community relations. A PR person in, say, Silver Bay knows the local media and service clubs better than one in the Twin Cities.

- Clarify language in the Minnesota G.I. Bill. The bill as it stands offers payment to veterans for three types of educational expenses: for college tuition, for career apprenticeships and for licenses and certifications. The new language clarifies eligibility for each component to avoid confusing the three or misuse of the three.

- Authorize the MDVA to hire dental staff directly. Presently, the agency can only contract for dental care of veterans in the veterans homes.

- Authorize the MDVA to operate adult day care. The agency presently offers adult day care at its Minneapolis campus, but this measure is a technical correction that provides more specific language than it presently has.

Minnesota Woman Veteran of the Year nominations sought

ST. PAUL — The Women Veterans Initiative is actively seeking nominations of Minnesota women military veterans to be considered Woman Veteran of the Year for 2020.

Nominations will be accepted through March 1.

A Minnesota Woman Veteran of the Year is someone who:

- Honorably served in the United States military.

- Displays leadership and supports women veteran issues.

- Is a serving citizen in her Minnesota community.

Nomination forms must include the nominee's general information along with a brief narrative explaining why the veteran is being nominated for the award. Nominations not selected may be retained for future award consideration.

Nominations may be submitted by any Minnesota resident. Submissions from Minnesota veterans, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), county veterans service officers (CVSOs) and other veteran groups are encouraged. To complete a nomination for this

prestigious award, please visit the Women Veterans Initiative webpage: <https://tinyurl.com/2020WomanVeteranAward> and complete a "fillable" nomination form. Nominations may also be mailed to: Women Veterans Initiative, Minnesota Humanities Center, 987 Ivy Avenue East, St. Paul, MN 55106-2046

In collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, the 2020 award will be presented as part of the 2020 MDVA Women Veteran Conference planned for Saturday, April 4 at the YMCA Mounds View Community Center, 5394 Edgewood Drive, Mounds View.

Please consider nominating outstanding women veterans for this recognition. We ask your help in reaching out to as many veterans as possible, in this final push, by distributing this information to your circle of influence.

Call 612-270-1755 or email glongfellow160@comcast.net with any questions.

Deadline for nominations is March 1.

Mpls. VA adds drug receptacle

MINNEAPOLIS — On Jan. 24, the Minneapolis VA Medical Center made available an onsite a receptacle for the no-charge disposal of controlled substance medications such as opioids, non-controlled substance prescription medications and over-the-counter medications.

Increasingly prescription drug abuse is recognized as a public health problem in the United States. Over 6 percent of people aged 12 and older have misused prescription medications in the last year, according to the Minneapolis VA.

"Misuse of medications such as opioids, anti-depressants, anti-anxiety medications, stimulants and other medications can lead to serious behavioral and other health problems, addiction, and even death," it states in a news release.

According to the VA's National Center for the Medication safety, 62 percent of teenagers who abuse prescription drugs abuse them because they are easy to find around a family member's house.

Seventy-eight people die every day of opioid-related overdoses.



POSITION OPENING: LEGIONVILLE CAMP GENERAL MANAGER

1. The Camp GM will be responsible for the overall operations and maintenance of Legionville.
2. The Camp GM will be available on site during the Camp Training season.
3. The Camp GM must possess good leadership and communication skills.
4. The Camp GM must have knowledge of general building maintenance, use of small electrical tools, hand tools, groundskeeping equipment, i.e.: mowers, hedge trimmers, tractors golf carts and 3-point hitch set-up.
5. Supervises day-to-day operations of the camp.
6. Makes deposits of monies received.
7. Assists in setting the yearly budget.
8. Suggests other camp policies as needed.

Persons interested must be members of the American Legion please submit your resumes to:

Eugene Leifeld, VP Legionville
663 Fourth St. E.
Zumbrota, MN 55992
or by email to:
eleifeld@outlook.com

Expert on Russian, Soviet military history looks at failures made by opposing forces

By Tim Engstrom

Operation Barbarossa — the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union — began on June 22, 1941. Franz Halder, chief of staff for the Army High Command in Nazi Germany, wrote in his diary on July 1 — the 10th day of the invasion — the following entry:

“One can say that the assignment of smashing the mass of the Russian Army before the Dvina and Dniepr has been fulfilled ... It is probably not too much to say when I assert the campaign against Russia has been won within two weeks.”

Bruce Menning, author of “Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army” and a professor of history at the University of Kansas, spoke at the World War II History Roundtable Jan. 14 at the Minnesota History Center’s auditorium in St. Paul.

Menning, born in South Minneapolis, has another book on the way called “Russian Army and the First World War.” He retired in 2011 as a professor of strategy with the U.S. Army.

Menning began his talk citing Russian military strategist Alexander Andreyevich Svechin. Imperial-turned-Soviet experts in the 1920s felt the next war would be like the Russian Civil War between 1918 and 1921. Svechin had his own ideas on what future wars were going to look like:

- More violent and technologically intensive than the Great War.
- Systemic: Capitalism vs. Socialism, a fight to the last man.

- Two routes to invade Soviet Union from the west: north of the Pripiat Marshes toward the power centers of Moscow and Leningrad or south of the Pripiat Marshes to the breadbasket of Ukraine and the oil fields of Caucasia.

- Outcome would be decided by access to resources: food and fuel.

Svechin concluded an attack south of the Pripiat (also spelled as Pripyat, Pripet and Pinsk, they are wetlands in modern-day Belarus and Ukraine larger than the state of Minnesota) would be most likely.

They planned a defense strategy called “PR” for Poland and Romania, as front invaders for Germany, France and western nations. That eventually turned into “GP,” for Germany and Poland.

“The Soviets had thought they would have to face the combined forces of Germany and Poland,” Menning said.

He said much of the Soviet defense planning from that era remains classified information. One reason he gave was that the Baltic States, at the time, were independent, and the modern-day Russians might not want to share with Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania what the specific plans were for fear of a black eye.

Still, the conventional thinking, despite Svechin’s outlook, was an attack would take the north route, Menning said. It would be swifter.

The Soviet military also wondered about an entirely new model of war, where “the enemy would fall on us like a bolt out of the blue,” Menning said.

Svechin was a Russian general during World War I who later became a professor at the Red Army’s academy. In 1931, he was sent to the gulags, given a divisional command in 1932, eventually landing back at the academy.

“He has a prickly personality, and he has this way of speaking truth to power,” Menning said.

He was arrested in 1937 and shot in 1938 as part of Joseph Stalin’s Great Purge. The Soviet dictator killed the men who knew how to mobilize the Red Army.

“Stalin gave the Army a beautiful case of amnesia,” Menning said. “He killed its thinking brain.”

That left commanders to learn on the job, and, meanwhile, the world was changing: Germany took over Czechoslovakia, the League of Nations proved helpless as Italy occupies Ethiopia, and a proxy war against Fascists in Spain failed. Fascism, not capitalism, now was the threat to communism.

Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, a week after signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

The Soviets had a hard time defeating Finland in the Winter War of 1939-40, which gave Germany an impression of how vulnerable Soviet defenses were.

A Soviet pre-emptive attack, Menning said, was still on the table. The Soviets now shared a border with Nazi Germany. The attack, if executed, would rely on accurate intelligence and acute timing.

Stalin, however, was “neither fish nor fowl” from January to June 1941, Menning said, and opted to appease Hitler.

“You can guess where somewhere in the middle can get you,” he said.

The Soviets made four fateful decisions, Menning told the crowd of more than 200:

- Now they assumed any invasion would be to the south of the marshes.

- They redeployed troops into the new territories acquired after pact with Germany, though the lands had no military value.

- They redeployed part of their forces to a second strategic echelon farther east.

- They failed to order troops to full readiness in forward defensive positions.

In fact, Stalin would discredit intelligence on Germany’s plans to invade as disinformation, saying it was all Nazis wanting to provoke the Soviet Union to begin a war. Meanwhile, Germans were coming into Soviet lands doing recon, as far as 200 kilometers in, with claims like they were looking for World War I graves, yet the Soviets did nothing, Menning said.

In the summer of 1941 came “surprise, catastrophe, destruction at all levels,” he said. The Germans invaded north and south of the marshes.

And that’s when a euphoric Halder predicted, in his diary, a swift Nazi victory.

What saves the Soviet Union? Menning said, first, Hitler’s “war of annihilation” played into Stalin’s “people’s war.” Stalin gives his “Brothers and Sisters!” national radio address on July 3. No one had heard Stalin refer to his people that way.

“Suddenly, they were brothers and sisters.”

Second, Germany had logistical planning problems. It’s a long supply line all the way to Moscow.

Third, behind the speedy tanks were horses and foot soldiers, which could not keep up. This left “floating pockets” of Russian troops behind the tanks to cause trouble for advancing Germans.

Fourth, German ambivalence. A key example is the mission to take Moscow changed when Fuhrer Adolf Hitler suddenly decides taking Kiev is more important.

Fifth, the Soviet command is unified and integrated. They know what their mission is — save Mother Russia.

Sixth, a mixture of coerciveness and structural resilience inherent in Soviet institutions. Despite the advancing enemy, the country didn’t just fall apart, despite Hitler’s belief it would.

Seventh, and quite notably, the Soviets had a second strategic echelon of forces — seven armies — farther to the east. They were able to attack the Germans as they reached the culmination



Speaking Jan. 14 at the World War II History Roundtable at the Minnesota History Center, University of Kansas professor Bruce Menning points a laser at a map of the first Soviet echelon of forces in June 1941. He also is a retired strategy adviser for the U.S. Army and hails from South Minneapolis.

WORLD WAR II

What saved the Soviets from Nazi destruction?

of their supply chain.

“It’s like Dalvin Cook breaking out for a 40-yard run and, boom, he gets hit from the other side,” Menning said.

By the summer of 1942, Halder writes: “The whole situation makes it increasingly plain that we have underestimated the Russian colossus ... If we smash a dozen [divisions], the Russians simply put up another dozen.”

Menning said blitzkrieg works best if the enemy is pushed against a barrier, such as the North Sea, but in Russia, it’s flat, and there isn’t a barrier until the Ural Mountains, 840 miles east of Moscow.

“There’s no geographical barrier to hit these guys against,” Menning said.

Germany in 1942 realized it needed grain and oil, and in the summer of 1942 it attacked on the southern portion

of the Eastern Front toward Stalingrad. There, in a fight that lasted from August 1942 to February 1943, in what became the largest battle of the war, the Soviets cut off the German 6th Army and elements of the 4th Panzer Army.

Menning noted that the Americans during World War II never pulled off an encirclement, but the Russian forces did.

By the summer of 1943, after the Battle of Kursk, it’s a different war. The Soviet commanders are hardened and seasoned, and the American Lend-Lease Act is having an impact, bolstering Soviet resources.

“The U.S. put the Soviet Army on wheels,” Menning said.

For example, America gave the Soviets 400,000 Studebaker and Dodge cars during World War II. In addition to airplanes, it gave them airplane fuel

— enough for 4 million sorties. The Soviets took air superiority.

“The refineries in Baku could not produce aviation-grade gasoline,” he said.

By the late summer, the Soviets are taking the initiative and working on clearing enemy forces from Soviet territory. In summer 1944, they launch Operation Bagration while the Allies launch Operation Overlord.

“You talk about scale. Again, the numbers are daunting,” Menning said.

The professor shared a slide at the end of his presentation. Svechin, in 1919, wrote that the German high command was talented but: “It was probably only one inch shorter than the height needed for victory. But it is precisely that missing inch which differentiates genius from an ordinary mortal.”



Bruce Menning, a historian who researches Russian and Soviet military history, speaks Jan. 14 at the World War II History Roundtable at the Minnesota History Center. He says Joseph Stalin, in 1938, purged the Red Army of a strategist who predicted the next war fairly closely: Alexander Svechin.



Earl "Sonny" Meyer, 92, is a member of William R. Witty Post 37 in St. Peter. He was wounded in Korea and sent to a hospital, but massive soldier losses resulted in no records. His family for the past three or four years has unsuccessfully sought to reverse the oversight.

KOREAN WAR

Not every wounded soldier received a Purple Heart

St. Peter's Sonny Meyer served in Merchant Marine and Army

By Tim Engstrom

ST. PETER — Earl "Sonny" Meyer, 92, never got a Purple Heart for being injured during war — shrapnel to a thigh — because the medic who was supposed to record his name most likely was killed, maimed or otherwise.

Something in the chaos of war prevented the tracking of the injury.

What about witnesses? Being new, he hardly knew his fellow soldiers in the mountains of Korea before he was hurt, nor the chaplain he later met that told him most of his unit was wiped out. It has been difficult to go back and find any survivors — whether it was years ago or today.

Representatives from several organizations have worked on his case, but, without a witness or documentation, it's been difficult.

Still, there's the common-sense fact: Why would a 92-year-old man lie? What's to gain but setting the record straight?

The story of Sonny Meyer goes back to 1945, when he graduated from St. Peter High School.

He wanted to enlist in the U.S. Navy, but a friend who was in the Merchant Marine came home and suggested Merchant Marine as a better way to see the world now that World War II was ending.

Meyer did his six-week training at Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn, New York, then he would get assigned to ships. At the time, the federal

government was contracting ships to haul troops back to the States, and his first assignment was one of those troop ships — called the C.C.N.Y. Victory. There was a spot for an assistant butcher on the City College of New York's vessel, so he took it.

The Victory headed to the Mediterranean Sea and ended up in a minefield. Meyer said the Navy was sweeping mines but several broke loose.

"And we were just sitting out there



in the Mediterranean," he said.

A few hours later, the ship picked up troops in Marseille, France, and returned to New York. The ship headed back for another trip, and this time, everything was smooth sailing.

It took eight to 10 days to cross the Atlantic, and the ships spent three days before heading back. Did he get a chance to enjoy France? — a class

"There was pretty much nothing to see," Meyer said. "Everything was pretty much leveled. You wonder how they even got that stuff cleaned up."

He came home for two weeks, then returned to New York and again was a butcher but now on a merchant ship bound for Germany to pick up troops. Often, once the ships had troops aboard, the butchers would ask for assistance. Usually, a few soldiers had been butchers back home and were happy to help.

"They knew more about butchering than we did. They had forgotten more than we ever learned," Meyer said.

He knew the baker, and together they would prepare the troops with fresh bread and steak.

"The troops really went for that." He also was part of ships hauling coal to Brazil. This time a deckhand, he thought a coal ship would be filthy. He said the ship was as clean as any other ship.

As the ship approached Rio de Janeiro, he was on watch, "and all of a sudden on top of one of those clouds was a cross. I figured, 'What the hell was I looking at here?'"

As the ship neared, a mountain took shape and the cross turned out to be the large Christ the Redeemer statue above the city. He had never heard of the famous sculpture.

He got to enjoy the beaches, then return to New York. His ship went into drydock, so he had to find another, and it was a Victory ship — a class

of cargo ship prevalent in those years — again headed to Brazil. This time, it was going to pick up horses, mules and cowboys to care for the animals. They made two trips transporting them to Crete.

Back in New York, they took on a load of horses and cowboys, but these cowboys were Mennonites from Michigan. The Mennonites were conscious objectors to war.

"But after the war they wanted to do something, so that's what they did. They were really nice people," Meyer said.

Off to Poland they went, but they couldn't. Kiel Canal through the German state of Schleswig-Holstein was closed because of winter freezing. The ship went back to Rotterdam in Holland and anchored in the harbor for a month with 1,700 animals on board. Fortunately, they had veterinarians, too, because 17 colts were born.

Meyer said the Dutch would come out daily in large barges and take away the manure.

Finally, they got to the Baltic Sea and to Poland. The horses were for farmers, as part of the Allied effort to restart the economy.

He made many other trips around Europe, and he enjoyed steering ships the most. Shifts often rotated among steering, watching and helping out on deck. One time, on Christmas, the ship he was on had a fire in the engine room and lost a boiler.

"We had to crawl back to Gibraltar to get that fixed. We spent New Year's Eve then in Gibraltar," he said.

The Merchant Marines got to know several British Tommies that night.

After two years, he came home to St. Peter and started farming west of town.

In 1950, the Korean War broke out, and Meyer was drafted into the Army. He did his basic at Fort Riley, then was sent to the 7th Infantry Division by May 1951, fighting somewhere up in the mountains. In early June, he was hit with shrapnel and spent time on the hospital ship "Repose."

There, a chaplain came by and said he was pretty lucky. The chaplain told him his company was so depleted it was assigned to reserve status, and he said his platoon only had four survivors.

It turned out the entire 7th Division was placed on reserve.

Meyer had been with the 7th a month, and he hardly knew anyone in his platoon, often calling soldiers by just their last name, state or nickname.

Meyer also had injured his back falling in a foxhole. The Army assigned him to a United Nations prisoner-of-war camp on Koje-do Island (now Geoje-do). At first, he was assigned to a machine gun on a watchtower before operating a switchboard. The camp grew, because at first the switchboard could handle 12 lines, then a new switch came and it handled 32 lines. By the time he left a year later, the switch handled 120 lines.

That meant he and a fellow from Missouri had to run a lot of phone lines on foot. They learned to gaffe poles, too. Eventually, they got a vehicle to get around.

The U.S. soldiers worked beside South Korean soldiers, who often oversaw work details performed by the prisoners. Everyone lived in tents at first, but eventually the work details made metal-roof buildings for the U.S. and South Korean soldiers. Meyer said the prisoners were good workers.

There was a lot of human waste, too. Typical 55-gal barrels were cut in half, and in them was the waste. Using a long stick through a handle, two prisoners would carry them out to sea at low tide

and dump them (see photo). The rising tide washed away the waste.

Meyer recalls several riots. One time, when he was in the watchtower, a riot broke out, and the Officer of the Day came up to the tower and began shooting into the crowd.

They prisoners stopped, but Meyer thinks the officer may have landed in trouble.

One compound mostly had North Korean officers, and they had tunneled

out past the fence. A prisoner eventually told U.S. authorities,

ties, and two bodies were found, possibly prisoners who also were going to tell.

No one escaped the camp, even when on work details. In fact, a sore point of peace talks was that many Communist POWs at Koje-do and other camps didn't want to return to North Korea or China for fear of punishment — a situation the Geneva Convention never considered — but those nations demanded their return. President Truman would not budge on the matter, considering humanitarian principles, so it was one reason the Korean War dragged on until July 1953.

In 1952, Meyer came home to St. Peter and married Betty Miller, now 88. He retired as a farmer in 91 and moved from the country into town. He is a member of The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans. He makes coffee every Tuesday and Thursday at Post 37 for his coffee klatch. He even has a key to the building.

He got the nickname Sonny as a kid. Back in the '30s, people called little boys "sonny." When he was 6 or 7, a salesman came into the yard while he was playing and said, "How are you doing, sonny?"

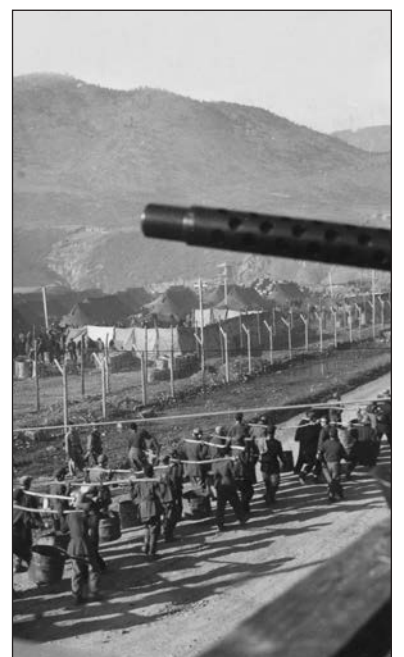
The boy asked his folks: "How did that guy know my name?"

As a result, the name stuck.

One time, a fellow Merchant Marine from Pennsylvania came to town looking for Earl Meyer. A resident said he didn't know an Earl Meyer but he knew Sonny Meyer. Maybe it was the same guy.

Sonny and Betty had three daughters: Barb of St. Peter, Cindy of Le Center and Sandy in Michigan. The couple, married 68 years now, has five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Sonny and his family have sought to fix the military mistake for three or four years now and remain hopeful that the powers that be can give him the Purple Heart recognition he deserves.



Koje-do POW Camp was on an island off the southeastern coast of Korea.

Xxxxxx

Listening Post



A crane lifts Cobra 327 off a flatbed trailer in Fairmont after a long haul from California.

Martin County vets get attack helicopter

FAIRMONT — The veterans memorial site in Martin County has received a Bell Cobra-Fixed Wing Attack Helicopter that served the U.S. Army in Vietnam and Laos from 1968 to 1971.

Five states were vying for the acquisition of the Cobra, “due to the hard work of Minnesota state and local veterans and volunteers, the Cobra was awarded to Martin County,” according to a news release.

The Martin County Veterans Memorial Committee, it says, is working to restore the helicopter in Fairmont, returning it to its 1971 likeness. The detailed restoration work has been in progress since fall 2019.

A dedication ceremony is planned for Aug. 1, 2020, featuring a parade, many VIPs, military personnel and family members of soldiers who served on this very helicopter, Cobra 327.

Nicknamed “the Snake,” it was good at night fighting, said Steve Chase, chairman of the committee.

It saw service in Laos at the Battle of Lam Son 719, one of the deadliest battles of the war. Flying this helicopter were members of the 7th Squad, 17th Cavalry, C Troop.



The famous helicopter is being restored in Fairmont.

Cobra 327 was mortally shot, the news release says, “and it was a ride the pilot will never forget. Yes, the pilot made it back alive to this day. The gunner, unfortunately, died from Agent Orange at age 37.”

To donate to the Martin County Veterans Memorial, visit mcvm.org.

Chase said a team of veterans traveled to California

and returned the helicopter to Fairmont.

“It’s rare to have a Cobra, but it’s especially rare to have one with a war history like this one,” Chase said.

The dedication will have a parade and a military-style ceremony, with interested parties, such as Vietnam helicopter pilots, coming from across the country, he said.



From left, Woodbury Post 501 Vice Commander Bob Dolan, Dale Johnson and Tom Cocchiarella serve Valley Creek Mall shoppers at the Wall of Thanks.

Woodbury Post 501 honors vets with Wall of Thanks at local mall

WOODBURY — The Woodbury American Legion Post 501 had another successful Wall of Thanks charity drive at Valley Creek Mall during the holiday season.

The Wall of Thanks is an annual event to raise money for local charities and to honor

veterans or members currently serving in the military. The booth was inside Valley Creek Mall across from Keys Cafe.

Visitors were able to donate money that will go directly to the Armed Forces Service Center, Christian Cupboard Emergency Foodshelf, Hastings

Veterans Home and Veterans Campground on Big Marine Lake.

Visitors to the booth were able to post the name of a veteran or a family member currently serving in the military, on a placard and affix it to the Wall of Thanks.

‘AN ASTONISHING PIECE OF FILMMAKING’



Russ Bentley, Dean Shepersky, John Pflugi, Bob Dolan and Herb Lyson of Woodbury Post 501 went to see the World War I epic film “1917.”

HELPING OTHER VETERANS



Onamia American Legion Riders Post 395 on Dec. 19 donated a \$500 check to Operation 23 to Zero to help veterans deal with life outside of the military. On the left is Membership Officer Jeff Benson, and on the right is Director Mark Anderson. Operation 23 to Zero is based in Stillwater and its website is op23tozero.com.

HOLIDAY HEROES



Pictured are Bob Weiman, Don Anundsen, Dan Selken, Jerry Peters, Mike Offerdahl, Don Modesitt and Ted Farnam. Not pictured are Mike Jacobson and Rick Swanson. The Monticello Fleet Farm contacted Monticello Post 260 on Dec. 22 about a “Holiday Heroes” program, where foster parents bring foster children to shop and children pick out toys worth up to \$50. They were short of “heroes” to shop with the little ones, so nine Legionnaires arrived on short notice to guide children through the store selecting toys. Selken said all of them found it enjoyable.

Old:



New:



Old:



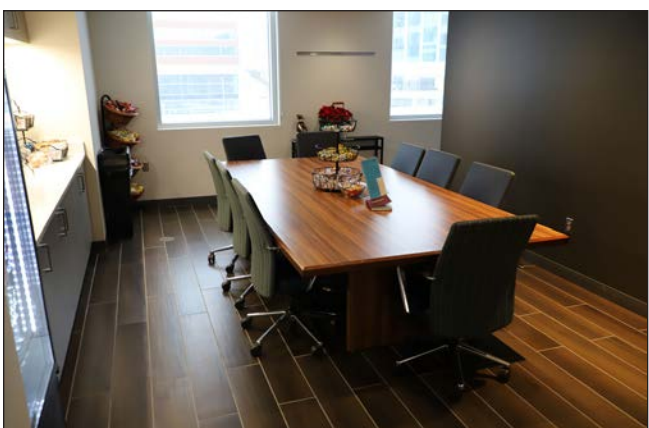
New:



Old:



New:



From left are Joe Jansen of The American Legion, John Purdum, Nancy Purdum Hall, a man (blocked), Jill Purdum, Penne Purdum, AFSC Executive Director Debra Cain, AFSC Board President Rick Dale, Delta MSP Chief Pilot Ray Baltera, a volunteer, MDVA Commissioner Larry Herke and Metropolitan Airports Commission Chairman Rick King.

The 49-year-old Armed Forces Service Center moves inside airport security, has twice the space

Continued from Page 1

The new Armed Forces Service Center is inside the security at the airport. It is across from the Blue Door Pub in Concourse C at the end of the tram ride. The old one was on the northern end of the mezzanine for the ticketing counter for Terminal 1.

Rick King, chairman of the Metropolitan Airports Commission, said the new facility has double the space (to 5,900 square feet from 2,700).

He said travelers generally like being on the secure side of an airport. He said he hopes military members enjoy the same benefit.

"That's when you are relaxed. That's when you are ready to talk to people," King said.

Commissioner of Veterans Affairs Larry Herke spent the night at the old AFSC when he was a young lieutenant waiting on a

flight, he said.

He thanked the agencies for the collaboration and added that he also spoke on behalf of Gov. Tim Walz, a veteran himself.

Delta MSP Chief Pilot Ray Baltera said 1 percent of Delta's profits go toward charitable causes and the AFSC is among them. He said Delta supports 15 military lounges across the country.

WCCO reporter Reg Chapman, a Persian Gulf veteran, said he stayed at the AFSC during his first visit to Minnesota. He had been to facilities in other airports but "this one is a little bit better."

He quoted Maggi Purdum writing about the reactions of the Vietnam soldiers who stayed back in 1970, a time when returning military regularly encountered angry protesters. She wrote: "They can't believe that people really care."

Who stays there?

The Armed Forces Service Center is open to active military, military retirees, former prisoners of war, Purple Heart recipients, Medal of Honor recipients, NATO officers and Department of Defense or U.S. Public Health Service personnel on a 24/7 basis.

It has a four sofas, six recliners, two large TVs, a dining room for 10, a large kitchen, a flight display, three restrooms, a shower room, a business area, 10 bunks for females, 30 bunks for males, two cribs, a lactation room and a playroom.



Nancy Purdum Hall looks upward after mentioning her late mother and brother Jan. 9. Her siblings, from left, are John, Jill and Penne.



Metropolitan Airports Commission Chairman Rick King speaks at the ceremony Jan. 9 to note the opening of a new location for the Armed Forces Service Center.



The 34th Infantry Division Brass Quintet plays patriotic songs as people wait to begin.

District commanders

1st District Dale Wellik



Greetings from the Mighty 1st District American Legion Family.

This year is getting started with the Mid-Winter Rally, which was educational with the Four Chaplains ceremony and then a short YouTube video of 15 questions to ask a veteran. It was very good.

We had a Gold Star family speak about the Gold Star memorial that is going to be built on the grounds at the Dodge County Courthouse. This is going to be the first one in the state of Minnesota.

They are working in conjunction with the Hershel "Woody" Williams Medal of Honor Foundation.

Many committee reports were given this year, if the committee chairman wasn't in attendance a written report was sent and read at the rally.

We have a District rally coming up Feb. 22 in conjunction with a revitalization at Austin

Post 91 and surrounding area posts, and programs planned for that day.

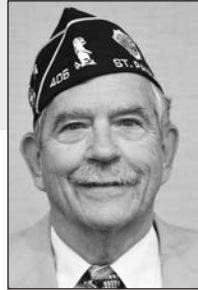
The Legion Act has had an effect on membership; people want to join. If it is one or a hundred, it all counts. Carry an application with you. Sometimes all it takes is to mention it to someone, and they may be ready to join. If you need or want help, ask another member or the membership chairman to assist you.

Medical benefits and eligibility get your ID card and sign up through your veterans service officer. Before you need that medical care.

Remember the deployed and their families who may need assistance and prayers in these times.

Thank you for your service and support.

4th District Joe Jansen



Happy New Year! We started off great meeting at the Richfield Post 435 on Jan. 4 for the 4th and 5th District Mid-Winter Conference.

Then, on the morning of Jan. 8, Mike Ash represented the Department at the grand opening of the Armed Forces Service Center.

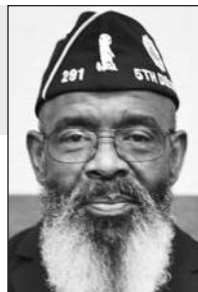
Later that same day Teresa Ash represented the Department at the re-opening of the bridge at the Minneapolis Veterans Home.

Next up on Jan. 11 was the

Constitutional Speech Contest at Arcade Phalen Post 577 in St. Paul.

Mickey Orstrum held a training event that same afternoon on MyLegion.org. Many of your fellow Legion members attended the Jewish War Veterans installation ceremony in the evening of Jan. 14. We look forward to the St. Paul Winter Carnival Parade on Jan 25.

5th District Andrew Rose Sr.



Greetings, to the Fighting 5th District. Thanks for putting on a successful Mid-Winter program. Special thanks to all involved on a special day. We would also like to thank Shawn Davis, on his efforts and planning that made this possible.

Our membership still isn't where we would like it to be. We will assume it's not because each member isn't making an effort. We still have time to rectify this.

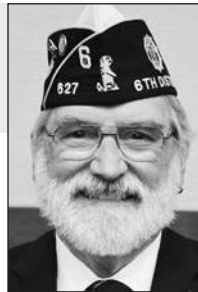
The next 5th District assembly is March 3 at Wold-Chamberlain Post 99 in Minneapolis

and hosted by Wold-Chamberlain.

Don't forget the commander's project, Every Third Saturday. Call Tom McKenna, to make donations for veterans and their families, 952-356-5116. Or he can be reached at tom@everythirdsaturday.

Never forget those convalescing at home, in nursing homes and private care facilities. A hospital visit to any veteran is always welcomed.

6th District Paul Edwards



Last month I wrote about membership and I am going to do the same this month, but from a slightly different perspective. It is well-established that The American Legion needs dues and donations to fund all the programs that we support. But all of us need to realize that being a good member of The American Legion takes more than just sending in a check once a year; it takes participation.

As I travel around the district visiting posts, it pains me to visit a Post that I know has 200 to 300 members, but only 15 to 20 show up. At last year's 6th District Convention in Brainerd, about 1 percent of the Legionnaires attended.

I encourage everyone to be an active Legionnaire. Find a way to be more involved. And don't feel limited to just the Post level.

People are needed to work at the County Council and District level also.

While most of the Legion's work is done at the Post level, a lot of decisions that affect the Posts are made at the District level. Consider your own personal skill set, whether gained from your time in the military, at college, or on the job.

Do you have admin or financial sector skills? Perhaps seek to be a Post or District adjutant or finance officer. Do you have a passion for helping veterans or youth? You might fit in as a veterans service officer or as a scout chairman. If you want to serve the Legion, there are ways to do it.

7th District Dean Knutson



Now that we have begun a new year, we need to take a step back to last year and take a look at the first few months of this membership year and the good things we have gotten done and then look ahead at what we can do better working as a family for the good of The American Legion.

The 7th District has had some very good luck in being able to get people to transfer out of Post 1982 — the at-large one — and back into the Department of Minnesota, and I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to David

Manson, membership director for all the hard work he has done.

We held our Mid-Winter on the 25th of January at Minneota Post 199. I hope to see many of the posts from the 7th District represented. Other districts are holding their Mid-Winter conferences as well during this time, and I wish them great success. Remember the Sweetheart

Rally in Montgomery on Feb. 8 and bring that special someone along with and enjoy the sessions and a good time of visiting. The Legion has so many good programs that we can be

proud of, so let's not be afraid to let people know who we are and what we stand for.

God bless the American Legion Family and God bless America!

8th District Anne Koskinen



Greetings.

The 8th District Winter Conference is over (just coming up as I write), and I hope that it was fruitful for all. I thank you for seeing Legionnaires, and the chance to newly meet members from our district. Please remember that Veterans On The Lake Resort is always there for veterans to rent.

Our host, Ely Post 248, is working hard to get guaranteed set-asides of U.S. Forest Service permits for handicapped persons' motorized access to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. This looks like it will happen.

There is a drive now to send cards for Valentine's Day to a 104-year-old USMC Maj. (ret.) as a gesture of love and solidarity. Please mail to: Operation Valentine; Attn: hold for Major Bill White; The Oaks at Inglewood; 6725 Inglewood Ave.; Stockton CA 95207. Bill is presently in good health. I

sent mine already.

As we move into 2020, I encourage Legionnaires to be active in the community, and please attend local Post meetings. Remember, we get along better if we don't talk politics (especially in this primary election season), and of course we are a nonpolitical organization.

Be sure to proudly fly our flag on the many holidays in February, and every day if you can.

I have submitted my intent to stand election for a second year as your commander. I welcome other Legionnaires to challenge me, or stand for other District offices. I solicit your vote at District Convention on June 6 in Hibbing.

Please follow The American Legion Twitter feed, which is @AmericanLegion.

10th District Tom Allen



Happy January. Yes, it is winter and more snow is coming. (Great.) For me, it is pennies from heaven.

The 10th District had its Mid-Winter at the Anoka Legion. Everyone had a good time. (We always do.) We even had the honor of the top four Legionnaires from the state of Minnesota as our guests. Thank you for coming.

Another guest we had was Veronica Ferlund. Her husband, Tom, is campaigning for department commander.

The 10th District Convention is at Osseo on June 5 and 6. Thank you, Osseo Post 172, for stepping up.

Our yearly snowmobile run is on Jan. 24 and 25. Come out and support them. Those are long and fun days.

Well, it quit snowing. I have to go and get plowing.

As it heats up overseas, say more prayers for our soldiers.

2nd District Brad Pagel



As I sit here winding down from a successful Mid-Winter for the 2nd District, I am listening to some of my favorite go to music, '80s and early '90s rock.

There are titles and lyrics of the songs that can apply to the American Legion Family. We are always doing the same ol' situation when we meet, talking about living on a prayer that more young veterans will join our ranks. We can't fight this feeling that they are going their separate ways. We can't stop believing in our mission and focus. Some of us have lost our way in different aspects of The American Legion's mission and focus.

To quote a part of a song by Lauren Daigle's "Rescue," I will send out an army, To find you in the middle of darkest night, It's true I will rescue you, I will never stop marching, To

reach you in the middle of the hardest fight, It's true I will rescue you, I hear the whisper underneath your breath, I hear you whisper you have nothing left.

Think about those words and how you and I can apply that to the mission and focus of the American Legion Family.

The 2nd District function on Feb. 22 in Slayton will be a presentation on public relations. This is open to not only Legion Family but also leading members of your communities as well. The southern part of our sister 7th District is invited as well. Contact me if you plan on attending or have questions. My email is bppagel@gmail.com. Still Serving America.

3rd District Linda Dvorak



Hello from the 3rd District, Is anyone as tired of winter as I am?

The 3rd District just had its Mid-Winter, and we had great speakers talking about Legion College, suicide prevention and end-of-life care for veterans. The MyLegion.org training is still being offered to all Districts, if interested.

One district is currently working out the details. This program will be available to the post level soon. The 3rd District is planning its first post-level MyLegion.org training sometime in March. This is a wonderful tool to boost membership.

The American Legion Toolkit is another valuable tool for each post or district. Check it out at <https://www.legion.org/prtoolkit>. There is so much information in this toolkit, including public service announcements (PSAs) for the programs within The American Legion.

They can be sent to a local radio station or put in local newspapers to get the word out about The American Legion and all that we do.



Charity the way it should be

HEY, RESERVE YOUR SPOT!

National Commander's Tour

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

Location	Meal	Time	Phone
Monday, Feb. 17, 2020			
Adams Post 146	Breakfast	8 a.m.	507-582-3266
Waseca Post 228	Lunch	noon	507-833-9935
Albert Lea Post 56	Dinner*	6 p.m.	507-373-7993
Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2020			
Wells Post 210	Breakfast	8 a.m.	507-553-3012
Madelia Post 19	Lunch	noon	507-642-8106
Redwood Falls Post 38	Dinner*	6 p.m.	507-430-2261
Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2020			
Gaylord Post 433	Breakfast	8 a.m.	507-469-2346
New Prague Post 45	Dinner*	6 p.m.	952-457-2129

On Feb. 19, the tour will stop at Minnesota State University, Mankato, around 11 a.m. for lunch with veteran students. No reservations will be taken for the meal time.

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



The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 20 Vol. 5

President Mary Hendrickson • Secretary Sandie Deutsch

Dept. HQ: Veterans Service Building, St. Paul, MN 55155 651-224-7634 February 2020

A committee of 5 ready to interview candidates

President's Column

Mary Hendrickson



January proved to be a busy month for District Mid-Winter rallies. Jan. 4, the first Saturday of the month, gave me the opportunity to bring greetings to the 10th District in Anoka, the 4th and 5th districts at Richfield Post 435 and a final stop at Stewartville in the 1st District.

It's always fun to see longtime friends of ours in the American Legion Family, as well as meet and greet new family members. On Jan. 11, my husband, Carl, and I stopped by the 2nd District Mid-Winter in Sleepy Eye. The man who services our automobiles has been scratching his head over how often we come in for oil changes! The mileage adds up quickly, but so does the fun and camaraderie at each stop we make.

As I write this column on Jan. 20, Jan. 25 is going to pose a real dilemma with four District Mid-Winter rallies scheduled for the same day! I wonder if the Finance Committee will budget for a small airplane rental and a pilot for a day.

As you all probably know, Department Secretary Sandie Deutsch will be retiring in 2020. She's succumbing to the lure of the open road and grandchildren in Texas.

Replacing Sandie will not be an easy task. It's one challenging job with a lot of responsibility. You might have seen our job advertisement, under "Position Opening: Executive Secretary," in the December and January issues of The Minnesota Legionnaire.

I've assembled a committee of five members to interview candidates. Members of the hiring committee besides myself include 1st Vice President Patti Coleman, 2nd Vice President Mary Kuperus, Past Department President Norma Tramm and current Finance Committee member Judy Ackerman. The candidate recom-

mended by the hiring committee must be ratified by the Department Executive Committee. It's an ongoing process with an official announcement coming after all candidates have been interviewed and the ratification vote taken.

This is one of those Februaries with 29 days. I'm looking forward to the Sweetheart Rally on Feb. 8 with my Membership Chairwoman Sharon Thiemecke leading the event at the microphone. The Auxiliary has dropped slightly behind last year's membership totals at this time. Please brings lots of memberships to Montgomery.

Besides the Sweetheart Rally, I'm also excited about the National Commander's Tour. The month ends on Saturday, Feb. 29, with a stop in Anoka for the oratorical contest finals.

I only have one unit invitation scheduled for February. Please don't be shy about inviting me to a Unit/Post meeting or special event during the winter months. Having grown up in northern Wisconsin and living in northern Minnesota for almost 27 years now, I know snow and cold are part of the package of living in this beautiful part of the world. "Have snow boots will travel!" is my motto.

Happy Valentine's Day! Each one of you are valued and appreciated every day of the year. Thank you, veterans and American Legion Family members, for all you have done and will do in the future.

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

National president is coming to Minnesota this April

Get ready. National President Nicole Clapp will visit Minnesota from April 6 to 8. Department President Mary Hendrickson, NEC Raleen Tolzmann, Membership Director Sharon Thiemecke and Department Secretary Sandie Deutsch will escort President Nicole to various stops.

A complete itinerary will be in the March Legionnaire. As her visit is quite short, we will set up stops in the metro area.

This is a very big honor for our national president to visit so please try to attend one of our functions and get to know President Nicole.

Junior Conference is April 17-18

The annual State Junior Conference is slated to be April 17-18 at Waite Park Post 428 with the 6th District serving as hosts.

A fun evening has been planned for Friday, April 17. Complete information and the call to the Junior Conference was included in the January/February Unit mailing.

Be sure you share this information with your Junior activities chairman.

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

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

the Department office.

Unit Annual Reports

Unit Annual Reports have been mailed to each Unit in January. All reports, instruction sheets and history paper will be in one envelope. If you don't receive this envelope, contact the department office immediately. Please note: The Unit reports cover the period from April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

This year the reports have again been reformatted because of the feedback we received from the Units. We have made the Unit reports like those in the past. When our Units ask for better ways of doing things, we do everything in our power to come through

All Unit reports are due on or before April 15. Reports are important! Let's hear from every Unit.

Upcoming events

- Feb. 8: Sweetheart Rally, Montgomery Post 79
 - March 21: Appreciation Rally, La Crescent Post 595
 - April 6-8: National Presidents Tour
 - April 17-18: Junior Conference
 - April 18: Department Commanders Testimonial, New Prague Post 45
 - April 25: Department Presidents Testimonial, West Duluth Post 71
- Make a point to attend one or more of these events. It's a great way to meet fellow members!



To commemorate the American Legion Auxiliary's 100th anniversary, the members of Unit 430 of Bird Island gathered for a Christmas luncheon followed by a service project. Led by member Judy Jacobs, the members cut strips from plastic bags and then looped them into plarn (plastic yarn), which then Judy crochets into plastic mats. Each mat is rolled up and secured with a handle. She has already made three mats and then given them to be distributed to homeless veterans in the St. Cloud area. To make one mat, it takes between 500-700 bags and 90 hours. Unit President Sue Ebberts said members are dedicated to making this an ongoing service project.

Jan. 22, 2020, Membership:

District	Goal	Membership To Date	Percent of Goal	Membership Last Year 1/23/2019
One	4,177	3,505	83.91%	3,507
Two	4,191	3,593	85.73%	3,581
Three	4,064	3,353	82.50%	3,397
Four	624	512	82.05%	516
Five	603	512	84.91%	500
Six	5,393	4,578	84.89%	4,578
Seven	3,369	2,848	84.54%	2,857
Eight	1,363	1,104	81.00%	1,078
Nine	3,618	3,045	84.16%	3,134
Ten	4,304	3,405	79.11%	3,392
1982	178	176	98.88%	124
Totals	31,884	26,631	83.52%	26,664

Send in reservations for 2020 Minnesota Girls State

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

After your Unit sends in the reservation fee (\$300 per girl)

and it has been processed, your Unit will receive a packet of information including a complete registration packet for each girl you are sponsoring. This will be sent to the person who signed the reservation form.

Information will be mailed to each high school in January. The schools will be waiting to be contacted by you. Let them

know now if you will be sponsoring a girl.

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

business or organization may provide the fee to sponsor a girl, but this must be run through a Unit.

This year the American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State be held at Bethel University. The session will be held June 14-20. Please contact the Department Office if you have any questions.

February is Americanism Month

Here is something from the 100th Anniversary History Program:

“Special 100th Anniversary History Program Facts: Americanism: a term which became relevant in the latter 19th century standing for allegiance to traditions. When the concept of Americanism was first used, nearly half of all Americans had not attended high school and many, being immigrants, did not speak English. Education came to the forefront to teach English, Americanism and Patriotism as well as to understand what our veterans had endured during the war. As the programs of the American Legion Family grew, so did the knowledge and feeling of Americanism and the U.S. Flag became our symbol of freedom and patriotism, known all over the world.”

I hope you have all been promoting the Americanism Essay contest with your Units. Essays should be getting in the mail by March 20 to me. And don't forget to fill out the cover sheet completely!

Check out the Star-Spangled Kids program. Star-Spangled Kids is an initiative to educate children and youth in the history of the United States from the aspect of patriotism, Americanism and the U.S. Constitution. Auxiliary members can partner with the American Legion Family, team with their education chairman, and bring veterans or active duty military into the

classrooms to talk about what their service means in defending the Constitution

This year, I would again like to emphasize increased participation in the Americanism Essay Contest. There is a cash prize for the top-three essays in each class. The cover-sheet and topic will have been in this year's first Unit mailing. Topic this year “How can we address the health and well-being of our veterans, military and their families?”

By the time you read this, Districts will have chosen the winners in the Oratorical Contest. I hope some of you had a chance to hear these young people.

Continue to support flag promotion and protection. Become involved in local patriotic programs, patriotic holiday observances, Get Out the Vote — a presidential election is coming up before we know it in 2020!

And don't be afraid to apply for awards — both Department of Minnesota and National! You might be surprised.

Oh, and thank you for the midyear reports. One chairperson sent me this with her report, and it started me thinking:

“I started to think about what I personally do as the chairman. So here is my contribution to the Americanism program at my unit. We hear a lot about honoring our flag, fly the flag, wear our branding clothing and pins, etc. Celebrate the holidays that honor our veterans.

America

Joanne Joachim



“It occurred to me to investigate *why* do we honor our flag so proudly. It runs deep. *Why* do we call ourselves patriots? Who gave that distinction to us and how? What does it really mean to be an *American*? What makes America different from the rest of the world or other countries?”

“These were profound thoughts, so I started researching. It was so fascinating to me, and it gave me chills. The thought occurred that others might be just as uninformed as I was so I decided to share my findings with my unit. This was my way of trying to inspire all of us to take time to reflect on *what it really means to be an American*.

“My hope is that it lights a fire in each and every one of us to be so proud of who we are and to go out and light that fire in others and inspire them.”

Joanne Joachim is the Americanism chairwoman of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota.

Secretary's Notes

Sandie Deutsch



Well, here it is already February — got to spend a couple weeks looking for that perfect winter home, visited the Texas kids, and we are more confused as to what we want to do when we grow up than ever.

At least we made it back to Minnesota still as a married couple — no deaths incurred (laugh out loud).

Busier than ever in the Department Office — looking forward to all of the upcoming events. Hope to see many of you at one or all of them. Shorty is officially retired — not sure how his staying in bed in the morning and my having to drive 55 miles to work is going to go over. We will see.

Again, I want to remind you to make sure and invite President Mary to your Unit meeting or function. She is such a wonderful lady and loves to meet as many members as possible.

Have a wonderful Valentine's Day and make sure you treat those special ones well. We all love flowers and chocolates.

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

Get to know Scrip Gift Cards

The American Legion Auxiliary Minnesota Girls State program is committed to keeping the cost down to Units to send citizens to Minnesota Girls State.

We are selling Scrip Gift Cards to raise money for the program. Scrip Gift Cards are available for many retailers and are accepted like cash. The amount you pay is the same as the value of the card and the commission we earn is paid by the retailer to Minnesota Girls State.

Many of the cards we sell are reloadable online after you set up an account. Minnesota Girls State gets the commission from those. Many retailers offer Scripnow cards which you can print out at home and

use like cash. Minnesota Girls State gets the commission as well, when you set up an account.

Scrip Gift Cards will be available at the Sweetheart Rally. The cards we have available right now are for Target, WalMart/Sam's Club, Cub Foods and Amazon.com. Each of these cards cost \$25, and they are each worth \$25 when they are redeemed.

If you are interested in different retailers or different denominations, please contact Peggy Tesdahl by text message at 612-715-4489 or by email at ranpegt0814@hotmail.com. If we get them ordered in time, they will be at the Sweetheart Rally on Feb. 8.

BLANKET PARTY





On Dec. 6, 20 members of the Daniel R. Olsen (Eagan) American Legion Post 594 and Auxiliary Unit 594 participated in the annual Trim-the-Tree event at the Minnesota Veterans Home in Hastings. The group had a really good time decorating three of the facility's common areas and donated holiday treats to the residents and staff while there. The Auxiliary Unit also donated over 30 tie-blankets and three quilts while at the veterans home that evening. The blankets were put together earlier in the year by Unit and Post members, as well as by some extended Legion Family friends. The quilts were donated to the Auxiliary Unit by a Dakota County quilting guild.


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Driven to be Different
WE SUPPORT OUR VETERANS
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Versatility Meets Value
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Burnsville: 952-435-8889
Roseville: 651-633-7887
Des Moines: 515-207-3555

Veterans Linkage Line™
minnesotaveteran.org | 1-888-LinkVet (546-5838)
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100TH PLUS AUXILIARY PLUS

 <p>4 Seasons Vacations, Inc. GROUP TOURS AND VACATIONS FOR PEOPLE GOING PLACES 507-373-4705 or 1-800-328-4298 travel1@4seasonstravel.net www.4seasonsvacations.com</p>	<p>Heart of Alaska July 15-22, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney •Nonstop Delta flights •7 nights superior accommodations •14 Meals; 7 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 2 dinners •Iditarod Trail Headquarters with Sled Dog Demo •Ride the Alaska Railroad in a Express Dome Car •Denali National Park Natural History Tour •Riverboat Discovery Cruise •Meares Glacier · Chena Indian Village •Prince William Sound · Pan for Gold at Dredge #8 <p>\$.3,799.00 per person double occupancy</p>	<p>MN Twins Training Camp March 4 - 14, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Joyce Langerud •Deluxe motorcoach transportation •10 nights accommodations •16 Meals •4 Twins Spring Training Game tickets •Edison Ford Estates •Anheuser Busch Brewery Tour •Louisville Slugger and Coca Cola Museums •Nashville Nightlife Dinner Show •Luggage handling <p>\$.1,969.00 per person double occupancy</p> 
<p>Arizona Getaway March 13-29, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Cindy Peterson •Roundtrip Delta flights •10 nights accommodations •10 breakfasts •Sedona •Tombstone and Bisbee •You can spend time by the pool, on the golf course, or take a complimentary shuttle to nearby attractions. <p>\$.2,499.00 per person double occupancy</p>	<p>Savannah & Charleston April 18 - 26, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Cindy Peterson •Deluxe motorcoach transportation •8 nights accommodations •14 Meals •Guided Trolley Tour of Savannah •Guided tours of St Simons Island and Jekyll Islands •Harbor Cruise in Charleston •Luggage handling <p>\$.1,699.00 per person double occupancy</p>	<p>Monuments of Washington D.C. May 15 - 19, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney •Roundtrip Delta flights •4 nights accommodations •8 Meals •Guided Memorial and Monument Tours •Tram ride through Arlington National Cemetery •Two full day guided tours of Washington D.C. •Admission to George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Garden •WWII Memorial, Capital Hill, Embassy Row, Korean War Veterans Memorial, The Smithsonian, Martin Luther King Jr National Memorial, Lincoln Memorial •Luggage handling <p>\$.1,599.00 per person double occupancy</p>
<p>Rhine River Cruise June 17 - 27, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Glen Parsons •Roundtrip Delta flights •2 nights accommodations at Superior hotels •7 night southbound cruise on the Vista •All meals and entertainment onboard the Vista •All transfers to and from the airport, hotel and ship •All entrance fees outlined in the itinerary •Luggage handling on the ship <p>\$.6,899.00 per person double occupancy</p>	<p>Alaska Tour & Cruise August 15-29, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney •Roundtrip Delta flights •7 nights accommodations •7 night Southbound Cruise on the Grand Princess® •All meals and entertainment onboard the ship •Onboard gratuities and transfers to/from pier •All sightseeing/entrances fees as stated in itinerary •Luggage handling <p>\$.5,099.00 per person double occupancy</p>	<p>Irish Gold Sept. 26-Oct 5, 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •4 Seasons Tour Director Tammi Haney •Roundtrip flights •8 nights accommodations with luggage handling •14 Meals •Blarney Castle •Trinity College & The Book of Kells •Cliffs of Moher · House of Waterford Crystal •Ring of Kerry · Kylemore Abbey & Gardens <p>\$.4,799.00 per person double occupancy</p>



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SILVER PLAN - \$25/year			
PRODUCT	NETWORK	DISCOUNT	PROVIDERS
Vision	Cole Managed Vision Care	45% - 60%	9,000
Hearing	HearPO	30% - 62%	1,600
24-hour NurseLine	Optum	N/A	N/A
Diabetes Management	Liberty Medical	15%	N/A

GOLD PLAN - \$60/year			
PRODUCT	NETWORK	DISCOUNT	PROVIDERS
Vision	Cole Managed VisionCare	45% - 60%	9,000
Hearing	HearPO	30% - 62%	1,600
24-hour NurseLine	Optum	N/A	Unlimited Access
Diabetes Management	Liberty Medical	15%	N/A
Dental	CAREINGTON POS	20% - 50%	24,000
Chiropractic & Alternative Medicine	American WholeHealth	10% - 30%	25,000
Vitamins	American WholeHealth	25%	N/A
Podiatry	DDS	20% - 50%	3,500
Long Term Care	Healthcare Synergies	5% - 30%	3,300
Shopping & Dining	DDS	3% - 10%	See Plan Materials
Hotel & Car Rental	United Marketing Group	15% - 25%	See Plan Materials
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