



## Veterans Restorative Justice Act down, not out

Senate votes 35-32 against; House waits

By Tim Engstrom

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Legislature shot down the Veterans Restorative Justice Act in the second special session of 2020, leaving veterans organizations and the attorney community bewildered at lawmakers' actions.

In a nutshell, the House waited to see whether the Senate would pass it. "It will pass in the House," said

Rep. Rob Ecklund of International Falls, chair of the Veterans Affairs Committee.

The Senate floor took up the bill July 20, debated whether to skip the committee process, and then voted 35 against, 32 for.

Everyone in St. Paul thought police reform would happen in August and the bonding bill would happen in July.

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Debate filled with questionable claims

ST. PAUL — On July 20, Sen. Steve Cwodzinski of Eden Prairie made a motion to suspend the committee process and hear the bill by roll-call vote.

Debate ensued on that motion, and it still is on YouTube for all of Minnesota to watch.

(Video is at Minnesota Senate Media Services and is called "Excluding Public Schools from Executive Orders," and the VRJA portion is

near the end at the 2-hour-22-minute mark.)

Here is the Cliff Notes version of how the debate went down in the Minnesota Senate:

Cwodzinski said the bill passed the House in 2019 and noted it's two years in the making. Veterans cannot wait. It creates a uniform system for veterans for low-level crimes if they can prove

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Roger Chamberlain



Steve Cwodzinski

## Dvorak: Thanks for 2nd year

BLOOMINGTON — Most of the officers and committee members of the Department of Minnesota are remaining in their positions for another year, much like they are at the National level, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"You agreed to be on for another year, and I thank you for that from the bottom of my heart," said Department Commander Mark Dvorak.

But there are a handful of changes, and the Department of Minnesota Executive Committee met over video conference on July 18 to name the new folks and rotate around a few others.

- The vice commander for the 2nd and 7th districts is now Harold "Hal" Meyer of Marshall Post 113, and, as such, he is on the Membership Committee.

- The new 9th District commander is Steven Sundstrom of Detroit Lakes Post 15.

- Amanda England of St. Paul Post 406 is vice chairwoman of the Oratorical Contest Subcommittee.

- Carl Hendrickson of Duluth Post

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# Big wound to big air

Keith Deutsch of New Prague lost a leg in combat, then pioneered a sport

By Tim Engstrom

NEW PRAGUE — It was Aug. 29, 2003. It was the first year of the Iraq War. The statue of Saddam Hussein, and his government, had fallen in the spring. He remained at large. Pockets of resistance remained, and an insurgency was just beginning to take shape.

The soldiers of the 244th Engineer Battalion were traveling in their trucks in a convoy near Tikrit in Iraq. Tikrit is the northern point on the Sunni Triangle and Saddam's hometown.

Roadside bombs were not yet prevalent, and the engineers hadn't run into much opposition.

But they had heard shots during convoys before, since arriving in May 2003. Farmers would fire rifles over their heads, but because they were blackmailed — for instance, enemy forces might take their children and hand them a weapon. Shoot the Americans if you want to see your kids again. Farmers even explained to U.S. officers why they were shooting over their heads.

But on this day, it was different.

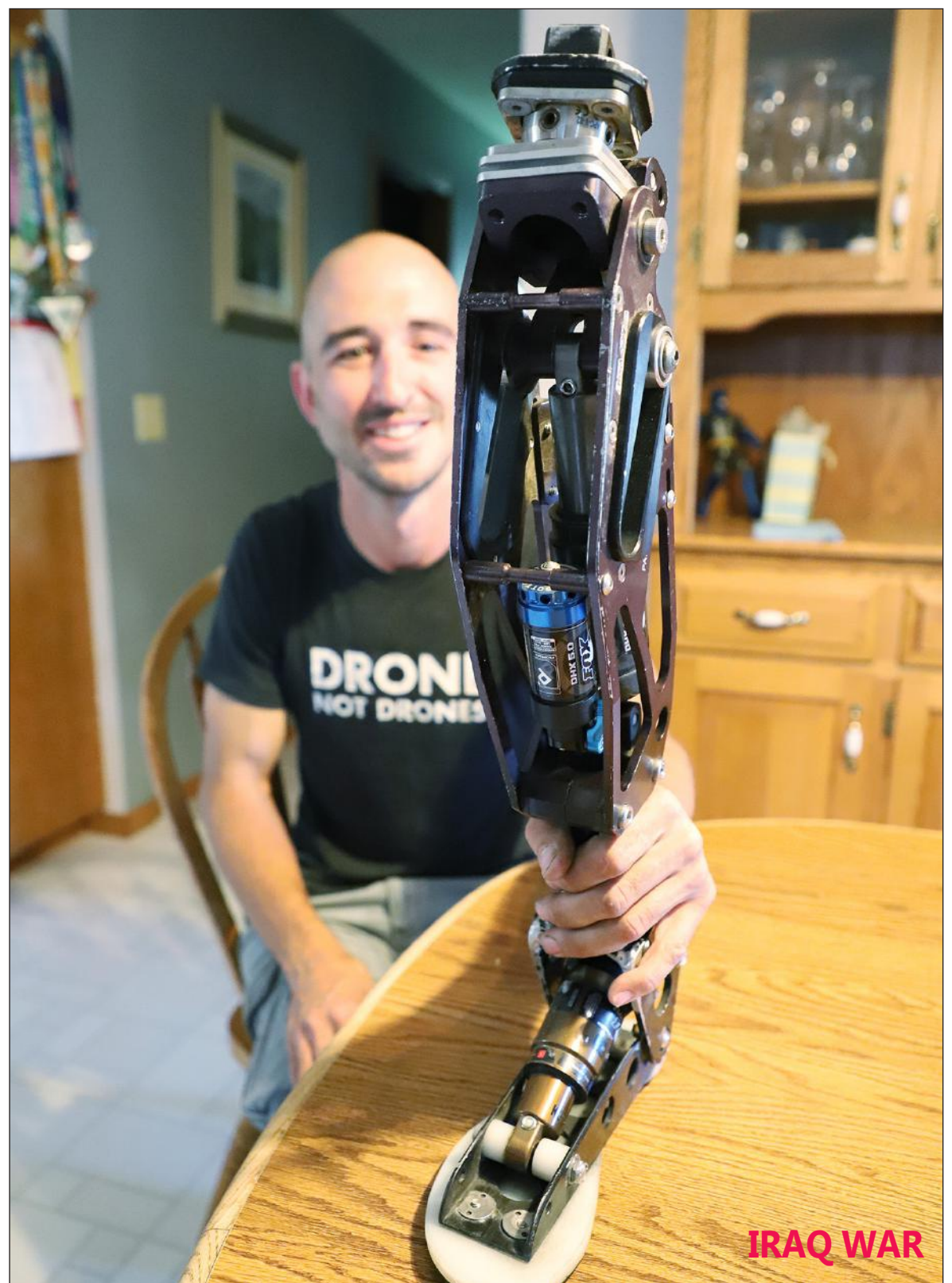
Keith Deutsch of New Prague was sitting on the tailgate of an M35 series 2 1/2-ton cargo truck, a deuce-and-a-half. It was the rear vehicle in the convoy, and he manned an M249 Squad Automated Weapon. Its military nickname was SAW.

And it can sound like one, too. A SAW fires 5.56 mm cartridges and has a sustained rate of fire of 100 rounds per minute. The rapid rate is 200 a minute, and the cyclic rate is 650 to 850 a minute.

The lead vehicle was a typical turtle-shell Humvee. The enemy bullets struck it first. Two stuck Staff Sgt. Mark Lawton of Hayden, Colorado.

Deutsch knew right away the shots were AK-47 rounds fired with accuracy. Whoever fired them were not farmers.

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IRAQ WAR

Keith Deutsch of New Prague sits at the kitchen table of the family farm. He holds a Moto Knee, a prosthetic for adaptive snowboarding that helped him with the X Games national championship.

# Minn. CTF meets with Gov. Walz

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Instead, the bonding bill went nowhere, and police reform passed.

“Looking back,” said Tommy Johnson, legislative officer for the Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars, “we should have included it in the policing bill, but we didn’t because they told us they were not going to pass it. We got screwed every which way on this one. They tell you they are going to do something, and they don’t, and they tell you they are not going to do something, and they do.”

Johnson was acting on behalf of the VFW but also the Minnesota Commander’s Task Force, which includes The American Legion, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans, American Veterans, Jewish War Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America and Military Order of the Purple Heart. Several have passed national resolutions in favor of veterans treatment courts.

The American Legion National Executive Committee passed it in 2016 at the National Convention in Cincinnati.

Amy Koch, the former Senate Majority Leader who is a lobbyist for the Minnesota Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, said several organizations in the state’s legal industry support the bill, too.

“What happened is not too clear,” she said. “The bill has been in the works for several years, and it has support from both sides.”

Koch, an Air Force veteran, said the bill has been thoroughly combed over. If there is a piece of the bill that needs revising, then she would like lawmakers to let her know.

“Tell us what to do, not reasons not to do it,” she said.

Sen. Roger Chamberlain, a Legion member who introduced the bill in the Senate last March, advised his colleagues to vote against it on July 20, saying he would like the measure to have its hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee in the 2021 regular session. (See related story.)

Though the bill has long-term savings, counties choosing to implement veterans courts would have upfront costs, and he would like to hear from the state Supreme Court, he told the Legionnaire. As a practical matter, he didn’t like the idea of passing it during a special session.

Will it pass in the 2021 regular session?

“I have no doubt in my mind that it will,” Chamberlain said. “We have the attention now on the bill, and it shouldn’t be a problem to get across the finish line.”

Vets organizations still hold out hope for the August session.

## VRJA background

Veterans treatment courts have existed in Minnesota as a pilot since 2008. This state, along with Buffalo, New York, were pioneers in the USA.

They now exist in 27 of the state’s 87 counties. They allow judges to hold pleas and instead send a veteran facing criminal charges — and if the action can be tied to combat trauma or other military-related trauma — to get treatment instead.

Instead of the government paying tax dollars to lock up a veteran and mark them for life as a criminal, this helps them return to being productive, tax-paying citizens.

The measure failed in 2019. It was introduced and passed multiple committees in the House. In the Senate, it passed the Veterans Affairs Committee, then forwarded to the Judiciary Committee, where it was never heard.

Because it passed the House that session, it was debated in Conference Committee for inclusion in a tax-finance bill, and House members voted 4-0, with 1 abstaining, and senators voted 4-1 against it. It died.

During that session, Minnesota Management and Budget produced a fiscal note that said it would save \$1.3 million in the first two years and \$2.3 million the next two years.

What about the cost of the treatment? It might be paid by the military, the VA system, private-funded programs or even the defendant, all depending on the situation. The court system isn’t picking up the tab.

“A normal court system is adversarial by definition,” Johnson said “A veterans court is non-adversarial by definition. Prosecutors and defense attorneys are not looking for a win. They are looking for what’s best for a veteran, and that’s what the Senate turned their backs on.”

## Walz promise falls flat

On March 2 of this year, House Veterans Affairs Committee heard the bill, approved it and referred it to Ways and Means. The House Judiciary Committee heard it, too, amended and approved it, and referred it to Ways and Means. Then COVID-19 struck and the Legislature entered a five-week hiatus. When it returned, lawmakers focused on pandemic bills.

Then there was a first special session. Nothing doing.

The vets organizations of the CTF were upset they weren’t getting access to lawmakers. They pushed for a video conference with House and Senate leaders. Instead, they had one with House Reps. Rob Ecklund of International Falls and Bob Dettmer of Forest Lake, both are Legion members and leaders of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, on June 16. Then CTF members had a video conference with Gov. Tim Walz, also a Legion member, on July 10.



Tim Walz



Amy Koch

“There are few groups that I value their opinion more,” the governor said.

Walz apologized for not meeting with the veterans more frequently and pledged to come to CTF meetings once a quarter. The CTF members had a single request: Help the CTF get the VRJA passed.

How? The CTF asked Walz to publicly call out the Senate majority to pass this bill and save taxpayer money and to send it out in the governor and lieutenant governor email newsletters. Walz had a staff member acknowledge the request.

“This should have been done last year,” Walz said.

Johnson said Walz neither called out the Senate nor used his bully pulpit to advance the legislation in any way. The governor did mention it briefly in one email newsletter.

The second session began July 13, and Ecklund introduced the bill in the House. Rep. Sandra Masin of Eagan signed on the next day. Dettmer signed on July 20.

On July 14, the Star Tribune published a story on veterans organizations pushing for the legislation. The headline was “Vets make special push to expand veterans courts statewide.” With stories of how the legislation gave veterans renewed leases on life, it raised the issue’s profile.

One tale was a 70-year-old former Army major from Shoreview who once tried to commit suicide by cop after a six-year illness. He said every day the Legislature waits is a mistake. “It’s been a political football long enough,” he said.

Todd Kemery, chairman of the CTF, said, “I urge you to contact your elected official to support your hometown veterans and demand the Veterans Restorative Justice Act is instated.”

See the CTF public statement on Page 15.

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N ANDERSON, B.	Y EKEN	N KIFFMEYER	N RARICK
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Y BAKK	Y FRENZT	N KORAN	Y REST
N BENSON	N GAZELKA	Y LAINE	N ROSEN
Y BIGHAM	N GOGGIN	N LANG	N RUUD
Y CARLSON	N HALL	Y LATZ	N SENJEM
N CHAMBERLAIN	Y HAWJ	N LIMMER	Y SIMONSON
Y CHAMPION	Y HAYDEN	Y LITTLE	Y SPARKS
Y CLAUSEN	Y HOFFMAN	Y MARTY	Y TOMASSONI
Y COHEN	N HOUSLEY	N MATHEWS	Y TORRES RAY
Y CWODZINSKI	N HOWE	N MILLER	N UTKE
N DAHMS	N INGBRIGTSEN	N NELSON	N WEBER
Y DIBBLE	Y ISAACSON	N NEWMAN	N WESTROM
N DRAHEIM	N JASINSKI	Y NEWTON	Y WIGER
Y DZIEDZIC	N JENSEN	N OSMEK	Y WIKLUND
Y EATON	N JOHNSON	Y PAPPAS	

SF 33 MOTION

Cwodzinski

YEA 32  
NAY 35

A screenshot shows the results of the Senate debate on the Veterans Restorative Justice Act on July 20. The American Legion is nonpartisan, but since its founding it has lobbied lawmakers for legislation that benefits veterans and continues to fight for its members. It passed a national resolution favoring vets treatment courts in 2016.

## Video depicts Senate debate on bill

Continued from Page 1

it is tied to their military service.

“It’s strictly a policy bill, and according to the Department of Corrections, this will save the taxpayers of Minnesota \$1.3 million.”

Sen. Roger Chamberlain of Lino Lakes said he authored it in 2019, and he is a Navy and Army National Guard veteran. He describes it as a pre-trial diversion program, keeping people out of prison who do not need to be there.

He said many bills in recent days have not had hearings. He said he would like to hear from state Supreme Court justices. He noted several counties already have these courts, and not all counties have to do it. “This bill would simply provide guidelines and some consistency across the state for the counties that wish to do it,” he said.

Chamberlain said it does have a fiscal note, that the bill pays for itself. He thanked Cwodzinski for his motion.

Then he said: “I would encourage at this time, members, due to the short time and COVID, and we have 11 hours left here, presumably, or maybe less than that, that we vote no on this resolution at this time. We have time to go through this and work it out a little bit more before we end the session. I would say at this time it would be OK to vote no.”

He continued: “By the way, yes, the veterans organizations do support it. But we have had conversations today with them as well. They understand the situation. They understand the situation perfectly well. They do support it. They understand what’s going on. So members at this time, it’s not a wise vote. A good vote would be no to this resolution as it stands. We will continue to work on this. Sen. [Warren] Limmer is committed to hearings and doing more. But at this time, no on this vote, the veterans organizations I spoke with today understand that.”

\*\*\*Pause the video.\*\*\*  
Upon hearing this, several CTF veterans organizations quickly posted on social media they were not OK with waiting on it, and they called around to each other and to the United Veterans Legislative Council to see who said what to whom. Nobody fessed to saying the bill could wait.

The Legionnaire spoke with Chamberlain. He declined to say his source. He agreed to speak before with the CTF this

fall about the bill. (See more of his comments in the main story.)

\*\*\*Restart the video.\*\*\*

Gazelka, of Nisswa, spoke next. He said the matter would be addressed in a hearing. He also referenced Limmer, who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee, where the bill died in 2019.

“I think that is how we want it to be in the end,” Gazelka said. “Moving at the speed of light in a special session and adding things on is probably not the right way.”

\*\*\*Pause.\*\*\*

Adding things on? Unlike some bills in the legislature, nothing was added. It’s been a simple bipartisan policy bill. Gazelka could not be reached for a clarification.

\*\*\*Restart.\*\*\*

Sen. Jeff Hayden of Minneapolis said the bill has been around a long time and was unsure why it had not been heard by Limmer’s committee. He felt it was important regardless of COVID.

“If this is such a special bill for our beloved veterans in this city, state, country, it should have been a priority,” he said.

Sen. Karla Bigham of Cottage Grove said: “The irony is not lost on what has to go through a committee and what does not.”

She called the bill well-vetted and said many workers in the legal sector, including the state public defender, have asked for this bill to pass. She urged it to pass at a time the state courts will need to save dollars.

Senate Minority Leader Susan Kent, of Woodbury, spoke next, holding a copy of a similar bill authored by Chamberlain, SF 53, which she noted did have a hearing in the Veterans Affairs Committee on Feb. 14, 2019, where it was sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee, “where it sat for a session and a half.”

She said it should be passed and thanked Sen. Jerry Newton, of Coon Rapids, and Sen. Jim Carlson, of Eagan, for their work on the bill.

Sen. Jeff Howe, of Rockville, said: “I do believe this is a good program, but there are multiple types of programs out there. This isn’t the only one.”

He called for it to go through a process to go through the Judiciary Committee, to see which ones are the best ones to fund. He said Minnesota doesn’t have the funding.

“I know that we said this is not going to cost us any money,

but I know the first one that came out, the first fiscal note that came out, it was not a cheap ordeal to fund.”

\*\*\*Pause.\*\*\*

There is not another veterans treatment court. Howe could not be reached for a clarification.

The pilot program that came out a dozen years ago did have training dollars associated with it, if that is what he refers to as “not a cheap ordeal.”

This bill calls for no state spending.

\*\*\*Restart.\*\*\*

Sen. Julie Rosen, of Vernon Center, cited the state is facing a budget deficit. There will be cuts.

“I am not sure if we prioritize veterans over child protection, over dental, over mental health; there will be serious compromises and cuts,” she said.

She said she favored the bill but wanted to make sure it was right.

Cwodzinski returned to the podium, said the Senate passed three bills the prior week by suspending the rules and said this bill is as important as any of those. No one is going to be required to have a court specifically for veterans. It’s up to the county.

“A couple years ago, I read a book, I do believe it was called ‘Tribe,’ it was all about how the veterans came home from every war in history through Korea, and when they came home, there were places and communities, where they would come back and they would share their experiences with others. In a post-Vietnam-Iraq-Afghanistan world, those organizations like VFWs and American Legions have been closing left and right, and the veterans are coming home, they don’t have those networks that they once did to share their experiences. And they are finding themselves in isolation. Their families can’t relate with them anymore. And some of them are resorting to lives that many of us in this chamber wouldn’t feel are making the right decisions. And all the veterans court is doing is helping those veterans get through what they suffered in service for their country so they can move on and find purpose in their lives.”

Sen. Bobby Joe Champion, of Minneapolis, called for the service veterans have given to be considered so the bill can be called to the floor for a vote.

A roll call vote is called: 35 say nay, 32 say aye (but the screen shows yea).

Recess.

## Veterans Treatment Court Act passes Congress

Two days after the Minnesota Senate rejected a Minnesota version of veterans courts, Congress passed the Veterans Treatment Court Coordination Act of 2019 (even though it is now 2020) in a bipartisan fashion.

According to the Military Times, the act directs the Department of Justice to create a program that would provide funding and technical assistance to state, local and tribal governments with veterans treatment courts. It allocates \$20 million.

“We’re not out to punish. This is a treatment and rehab court. We’re here to identify illnesses and conditions. We’re here to get veterans well,” advocate, mentor, and retired Army Col. D.J. Reyes told Military Times.

Minnesota CTF Chairman Todd Kemery said Minnesota could be missing out on federal help with launching veterans courts statewide if it doesn’t pass the Veterans Restorative Justice Act soon.

# Veterans Homes dealing with COVID

## Agency could fall into the red

By Tim Engstrom

ST. PAUL — Ten veterans at the Minneapolis Veterans Homes have died related to the virus since the pandemic set in.

The Minnesota Veterans Homes were free of COVID-19 at the end of June but were not at the end of July.

Also, the entire Minnesota Veterans Home system might be running in the red next year.

These and other tidbits of information were reported June 26 in a site visit conducted virtually by the Department of Minnesota's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee.

The committee conducts site visits through the year.

This one was a conference call that brought Chairman Wilson Spence, committee members Bill Brockberg, Lynn Lyons, Dan Tengwall, Gary Munkholm and Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller together with Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Commissioner Doug Hughes and Senior Director of Veterans Health Care Simone Hogan.

The committee generates a report, and it is on the Department of Minnesota website: mn-legion.org. Hover over "Veteran Services," then go to "Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation."

As of the report's date of June 26, the Minneapolis Veterans Home was the only one of the five that had positive exposure of COVID-19. It reached both residents and staff. All other homes were COVID-free.

The Medicare website Nursing Home Compare says 24 residents at the Minneapolis home had COVID-19.

Since then, the landscape has changed and the homes are no longer COVID-free. The homes have established a number to get updates. It is 651-757-1599.

On July 27, the recording said there was one case each at the Minneapolis and Luverne homes. It does not say whether they were staff or residents. On Page 11, Commissioner Larry Herke says Silver Bay also dealt with two COVID cases recently.

Other information:

- The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is updating its state inspection to include a new COVID-19 infection control survey. Nursing homes are required to report information about how COVID-19 is impacting their residents.

- Minnesota Veterans Homes were mandated to institute COVID-19 areas. These are areas of isolation for residents with the virus. The homes have anywhere from 10 to 30 percent of their beds empty, meaning they are losing reimbursement from the federal VA fast.

- MDVA implemented "limited new admissions," though on a slow basis, where teams work with vets on the waiting list, alerting them to new admissions.



**Breezy Point Resort was a popular place for the rich and famous in the Roaring 20s. Today, it features a convention center, three 18-hole golf courses, a boat marina, an ice arena, four restaurants, four bars, cabins, condos and a resort hotel.**

# Fall Conference is on for Breezy Point Resort

NISSWA — The 2020 Department Convention planned for July and the 2020 National Convention planned for August were cancelled, along with Spring Meetings, Boys State, Girls State, Legion Baseball, Legionville, Veterans Day on the Hill and on and on and on, so it's a given Legion members across Minnesota will be happy to see each other again at the 2020 Fall Conference, slated for Oct. 22-24 at Breezy Point Resort in Nisswa.

The Fall Conference is the Legion Family's annual school of instruction. Please see the registration form to the left.

Participants should make their own reservations and should ask for Block 253750 to get

the Legion rates. It is \$110 a night for standard rooms with two queen beds, two double beds or one king bed with a pullout sofa. It is \$149 a night for suites with two double beds or a king bed with a pullout. It is \$149 a night for a lodge apartment, too, which has two doubles and a pullout.

There are three-bedroom and two-bedroom condos. People can call or email for availability.

Online registrations are preferred by Sept. 15. The group coordinator password is BLK253750.

The inquiry email is mmorris@breezypointresort.com. The website is www.breezypointresort.com. The phone is 800-432-3777.

### 2020 Fall Conference Official Registration

Mail to:  
Roberta Nyquist  
Nisswa American Legion  
P.O. Box 427  
Nisswa, MN 56468

#### Registration sliding fee:

Registration received by Oct. 1: \$15  
Registration received after Oct. 1: \$20

Registration fees are for each person attending, except for Junior SAL and Junior Auxiliary members. Please copy and send a separate form for each person attending. All delegates, alternates and guests must pay the registration fee.

Please indicate "Fall Conference" on the memo line.

Please make checks payable to:

**Nisswa Post 627**

#### Conference dates:

Oct. 22-24, 2020

#### Headquarters hotel:

Breezy Point Resort  
9252 Breezy Point Drive  
Breezy Point, MN 56472

#### Contact the hotel directly for your reservations:

www.breezypointresort.com • 800-432-3777

District	Post	Unit	Squadron
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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- All new admissions to the Minnesota Veterans Homes are kept in the designated isolation areas for 14 days.

- COVID-19 changes included a federal VA increase of daily per-diem rates. It represents a 2.9 percent increase for fiscal year 2021.

- The Minneapolis Veterans Home's Adult Day Care Program was suspended in early March because of COVID-19. However, the staff created a Virtual Adult Day Care program with virtual activities and have 30-37 active participants.

Later in July, the Minneapolis VA determined the reimbursement rate would be the same for the virtual day care as the regular one was before the pandemic.

Also, American Legion Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller assisted the MDVA as it sought Virtual Adult Day Care reimbursement from the Minneapolis VA. The Minneapolis VA was working with the VA Central Office on seeking guidance.

After all, it is one of only two VA-supported adult day care programs in the country.

- Gov. Tim Walz has requested all state agencies submit a budget that reflects a 5 percent cut.

- The system has more than 30 iPads for all the homes. They have been used to facilitate visits at all sites. Leaders are hoping eventually for protocols to allow family in-home visits, but, to be sure, it probably would not be for another year.

- One question was: "Has there been additional federal or state funding to assist with the pandemic? The reply was:

"Yes — we have received funding from both — including the VA. However, the funding that was provided to the states relating to COVID has yet to be distributed to agencies. There does not seem to be enough funds to cover revenue losses and additional expenses that have been unique to the pandemic. We have a budget surplus from this fiscal year, but unless more funds are received, the SVH (State Veterans Homes) as a whole might be operating in a deficit."

- The system had to hire additional temporary staff when direct-care staff was out for any symptoms pending COVID testing or ADA accommodations. There were new roles, too. An example of a new position was a screeners at front doors.

## 2020 American Legion Department of Minnesota



The American Legion Department of Minnesota announces the 2020 Patriotism and Purpose Art Contest to honor our Veterans and the sacrifices they have made for our country.

The winning artwork will best reflect the impact our Veterans have on our communities and our nation, particularly in inspiring patriotism and love for our country among Minnesota's youth.

The art submission must be produced by the child without assistance from anyone else. The entry must be original and not a copy of another work. Good luck!

For more information, on the contest, please email [department@mnlegion.org](mailto:department@mnlegion.org) or visit our website at [mnlegion.org](http://mnlegion.org)

#### Entry Deadline

September 1, 2020

#### Who Can Enter

Minnesota residents under age 18

#### Entries

Original unfolded artwork on minimum 8.5" by 11" paper

#### Prizes

\$500 for each of the two age categories (5-12 and 13-17)

#### How to Enter

Patriotism & Purpose Contest  
The American Legion,  
Department of Minnesota  
20 West 12th Street, Room 300-A  
St. Paul, MN 55155

*Honoring Our Veterans*



# Legionville to get 75 percent this time

This article is my first for the new Legion year. First and foremost, I would like to thank the Department, District and Post Leadership that will be serving a second consecutive year for your dedication and commitment to our American Legion Family.

I personally visited with many of you, and without hesitation, you committed to serve in a leadership position for another year. You are all dedicated American patriots! I'm proud to serve with all of you for another year.

"For Love Of Country" will remain as my theme for the year. My two projects, Legionville and Wounded Warriors Guide Service (a Minnesota nonprofit) will remain as my projects. This past year 75 percent of donations went to Wounded Warriors Guide Service and 25 percent to Legionville.

This year 75 percent will go to Legionville and 25 percent to Wounded Warriors Guide Service. If you want your donation to go to only one of my projects, you can specify that and all your donation will go to that project. Please make checks payable to the following fund: Minnesota American Legion Foundation Fund 82. Thank you to all who donated to my projects this past year.

I'm happy to say that myself,

## Commander's Column

Mark Dvorak



Department Auxiliary President Mary Hendrickson and Sons of The American Legion Detachment Commander Dave Vulcan will be having a Joint Testimonial. We have been told that this is probably a first for the Department. It will be on Saturday, June 19, 2021, at the American Legion Park Ballroom, New Prague Post 45. More information to follow.

Membership Director Sy Fix held a meeting on July 15 for District leadership and important membership ideas were discussed. All districts were represented and did a great job expressing ideas on how to move forward for a more successful membership year. All are ready and motivated to have a great year! Please remember to ask if you need help with any membership program including MyLegion.org. We are all in this together and must work as a team.

We held our first Department Executive Committee meeting of the new year on July 18. The Department officers and District commanders were installed by National Executive Committee member Bill Barbknecht.

Thank you, Bill, for installing us! Many comments and ideas were shared during the meeting, one that will be considered is the possibility of having our Department Convention from Thursday to Sunday morning, rather than Wednesday to Saturday morning. Look for additional information on this subject in the near future.

As Legion Family members, we support the founding principles of our country. Through The American Legion's Four Pillars, we carry on our country's legacy. As we begin our 102nd year of making a difference, let's all take a moment to praise our successes and remind ourselves that our mission continues! Thank you all for your support, I am honored and humbled to be your Department commander — again.

For God and Country, we continue to serve.

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

# Don't say goodbye, let's say enough

## Chaplain's Corner

Betty Jass



Back in 2001, while I was driving in South Dakota I heard this story on South Dakota radio station 98.7 FM KISD about an aging grandfather and his young grandson-soldier saying their goodbyes as the young soldier goes off to war. (Author unknown.)

I wrote the musical verses and refrain to finish off this song called "Enough." This version copyright July 2001.

One day while I was waiting at the airport (Observer) I noticed an elderly gentleman standing with a young soldier as he prepared to fly off to war. Once the flight was announced, I saw them embrace each other, and I heard them say to each other "Enough" as they parted.

The elderly gentleman walked toward me and sat down in the seat next to me. After a few minutes, the gentleman said to me "I may never see my grandson again. He leaving to fight a war, and I'm dying of cancer."

I felt sad for the gentleman and I mentioned that I noticed that instead of saying goodbye they said the word "enough" and that I was a little confused. The elderly gentleman

continued to tell me how whenever anyone visited them, they would say "enough."

"'Enough' meaning that we are sending you away with the prayer that the Lord will give you whatever you need to make it through each day. As long as I could remember, even growing up as a kid that whoever came to visit, the mailman, a neighbor, or even a salesman after a long day's work would leave our house, we'd would embrace and say enough."

REFRAIN: Don't say goodbye, let's say enough. In God we trust, let's say enough.

Don't say goodbye, let's say enough. In God we trust, let's say enough.

Enough faith that the Lord will answer your prayers, enough courage to not put on airs.

Enough sunshine to warm your face, enough talent to dance with grace.

Enough compassion to comfort a friend, enough pride to stand by them until the end.

Enough patience to teach

a child to tie their shoes, and enough integrity to live by the golden rule.

REFRAIN: Don't say goodbye, let's say enough. In God we trust, let's say enough.

Don't say goodbye, let's say enough. In God we trust, let's say enough.

ENOUGH, ENOUGH, ENOUGH. (FADE OUT MUSIC)

So, as I finish this column, I'm not going to say goodbye.

I'm going to remind everyone to treat people as if it's the last time you'll see each other. Let each one of you pray "Enough," that the Lord will give you whatever you need to make it through each day.

We ask this Dear Lord as we continue with this pandemic for enough. Amen.

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

## Mail Call

### How to send ...

Send letters for Mail Call to tengstrom@mnlegion.org. Make the subject line "Mail Call" or "Letter."

### The U.S. flag belongs to all Americans

I must speak out and take issue with a July Mail Call which complained about Nancy Pelosi presenting a flag to the brother of George Floyd. I understand the emotions and feelings presented. However, this now common complaint perpetuates a mistaken belief that presenting a folded flag is reserved for military, fireman, and or police officers.

This is not true!

The flag belongs to all of us. There is nothing that prevents any American citizen from giving or receiving a folded flag. The traditions of presenting folded flags, which have flown over the Capitol, are routinely given through the Capitol Flag Program. In fact, members of Congress receive more than 100,000 flag requests annually.

I have presented flags and watched flags presented numerous times. I have never questioned the morality, worthiness or motives of those receiving the flag. It is a great honor to present this flag and to question the worthiness of those receiving the flag would bring dishonor to myself.

I personally have no issue with anyone receiving a folded flag as long as they treat the

flag with respect. By accepting a flag, I assume it will be displayed in a respectful manner. Displaying it may even stimulate some thought of what the flag actually stands for and may cause a change of heart and healing.

John Justin  
Navy and Air National  
Guard veteran  
Little Falls Post 46

### Letter on flag was really good

While reading letter writer James Mueller's "2 thoughts on the U.S. flag" last month, I almost teared up.

He stated what so many of us feel. Some people feel that they have the right to disrespect our flag. Obviously, they have never

served our country!

You are so right on those two thoughts.

Thank you for expressing what so many of us feel.

Mike McLean  
Richfield Post 435

### What about the soldiers at the fort?

The Minnesota Historical Society (MnHS), as a part of their current Revitalization Project at Historic Fort Snelling, is establishing a "place of remembrance" for two Dakota who killed many settlers in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 in Minnesota. The two were hanged at the fort in 1865. Construction is taking place

this summer, 2020.

But strangely enough, the MnHS is not erecting any remembrance or memorial to the thousands and thousands of soldiers who served at the fort, many passing through there, on their way to war or on their way home.

Since this is a fort, a military installation, one would think that the main focus should be on the military, on the soldiers who served there. They certainly are deserving of a memorial. It is about duty, sacrifice, honor and country. If you agree, go to <https://www.change.org/FortSnellingSoldiers> and sign the petition.

Thank you for your support.

Curtis Dahlin  
Roseville Post 542



### Legionville garage sale goes well

BRainerd — It was the second-ever Legionville Garage Sale, and it netted around \$9,000 for the safety patrol camp on North Long Lake near Brainerd.

The sale took place July 23, 24 and 25.

Eugene Leifeld, president of Legionville, said he was

pleased with the results and with the weather that weekend.

### Deer Hunt cancelled

CAMP RIPLEY — The annual John Zgoda Memorial Deer Hunt at Camp Ripley for disabled veterans has been cancelled for 2020 because of the COVID-19 virus.

The Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Minnesota will again host it in 2021.

The Minnesota

## Legionnaire

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Official publication of  
The American Legion  
Department of Minnesota

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

**Fax:** 651-291-1057

**Email:** [tengstrom@mnlegion.org](mailto:tengstrom@mnlegion.org)

**Web:** [mnlegion.org](http://mnlegion.org)

**Editor:** Director of Communications Tim Engstrom

**Editor Emeritus:** Al Zdon

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

# What's happening?

## Camporee remains on the calendar

BRAINERD — Legionville and the Minnesota Sons of The American Legion are planning the 51st annual Camporee to benefit Legionville School Patrol Camp.

It is Thursday, Sept. 10, to Sunday, Sept. 13. Most will be provided by the Sons of The American Legion.

However, the 10th District will host a chili feed on Thursday night.

The Friday dinner will be a steak fry provided by the 1st District.

The Saturday lunch is a fish fry held



by the 6th District.

Organizers say social distancing should be maintained at all times. Masks will be required inside buildings. Sanitizing stations will be available. Building capacities will be limited. Plan on tenting, trailoring or RVing.

Camping fees, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, are \$10 a day per person, \$75 max per family.

If you overnight off the property but participate in Camporee, the fee is \$5 a day per person, \$75 max per family.

On Saturday, members of the military and their family are complimentary.

Camping before Thursday is free. Ages 3 and under are free.

## POW/MIA event happening in Sept.

GREENFIELD — This city is inviting veterans, their families and the

general public to attend a special day to remember the sacrifices of prisoners of war and those missing in action.

The National POW/MIA Recognition Day Event is at 5:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 18, at Central Park, 7200 Greenfield Road in Greenfield.

All color guards and other ritual squads are encouraged to participate. The rituals will be led by Hamel American Legion Post 394 and Hamel VFW Post 5903. They will stage at 5 p.m.

At present, there are more than 83,000 Americans who remain missing from World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, Cold War and other conflicts.

## It's a new Legion year; challenge has been laid down

The American Legion Family 2021 membership year is upon us. With the new year comes a new challenge. It's the American Legion Family Membership Recruitment Challenge.

Any member who brings a new 2021 member or a new attendee to a Department event will receive a special gift.

For more information, contact your Department vice commander.

Continued on Page 6

## Taps



**Anderson, Ralph W.**, 99, veteran of World War II, died July 16, 2020. He was a 54-year member and past commander of Robbinsdale Post 251.

**Bardon, Willard J.**, 91, Army veteran of the Korean era, died May 22, 2020. He was stationed in Germany during the war. He was a 34-year member of Le Sueur Post 55.

**Barsness, Richard "Dick,"** 80, Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, died May 29, 2020. He was a 44-year member of Bloomington Post 550.

**Berg, Odean E.**, 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died July 2, 2020. He was a 69-year member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Best, Dennis D.**, 75, Army veteran of the Vietnam era, died Jan. 26, 2020. He was a 53-year member of Adams Post 146.

**Biskey, Harold "Bud,"** 96, Army veteran of World War II, died June 7, 2020. He served under Gen. George S. Patton and was wounded in action in Germany. He was a member of Swanville Post 313.

**Borgh, Kenneth A.**, 89, Air Force veteran of the Korean era, died July 13, 2020. He served as an aircraft mechanic in the 1st Tow Target Squadron at Biggs Air Force Base. He was a 58-year member of Coon Rapids Post 334.

**Bredeck, Roger**, 86, Navy veteran of Korea, died May 30, 2020. He was a 44-year member of Albany Post 482.

**Brewers, Robert "Bob,"** 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died June 26, 2020. He was a 67-year member of Marshall Post 113.

**Brick, Harold J.**, 95, Army veteran of World War II, died May 20, 2020. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and his unit held its ground for six days without food or water. He was a POW at Stalag IX-B in Bad Orb, Germany, then Camp Trebnitz near Hartmannsdorf. Upon returning to the United States, his family did not know he was alive. He was a 74-year member of Roseville Post 542 and a founder of Lake Henry Post 612.

**Christen, Roger**, 72, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died Feb. 27, 2020. He served with the 25th Infantry Division. He later enlisted in the Air Force and was stationed stateside. He was a member of Albany Post 482.

**Christensen, Eugene "Gene,"** 81, Air Force veteran of Vietnam, died May 21, 2020. He was a 54-year member and past commander of Bloomington Post 550.

**Cierzan, George L.**, 93, Navy veteran of World War II, died May 31, 2020. He served on the light cruiser USS Birmingham. He was a 40-year member of Winona Post 9.

**Ebersviller, Vern C.**, 76, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam era, died July 11, 2020. He was a policeman. He was a member of Waconia Post 150.

**Ewest, Scharol A.**, 86, Navy veteran of World War II, died April 12, 2020. She was a 45-year member of Waseca Post 228.

**Farrington, Richard "Rick,"** 73, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died July 7, 2020. He was a past Post commander and a 37-year member of Lake City Post 110.

**Fette, Leo**, 87, Army veteran of the Korean era, died June 19, 2020. He was a 48-year member of Waseca Post 228.

**Goodman, John**, 94, Navy veteran of World War II, died July 15, 2020. He was a gunner on USS General W. F. Hase. He was a member of Red Wing Post 54.

**Gustafson, Raymond R.**, 93, Navy veteran of World War II in the Pacific, died May 30, 2020. He was a member of Bloomington Post 550.

**Gydesen, William**, 88, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died June 20, 2020. He served as a flight engineer. He was a member of Eagan Post 594.

**Hansmann, Frederick "Fritz,"** 82, Army veteran of the Vietnam era, died June 14, 2020. He was a member of Round Lake Post 461.

**Hjelle, Hilton J.**, 93, Army veteran of the Korean War, stationed in Japan as an MP, died July 5, 2020. Hilton was a 64-year member of Newfolden Post 427.

**Hughes, Jonathan L.**, 55, Navy veteran of the Iraq War and Persian Gulf era, died June 13, 2020. He was a

## Obituaries

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

Please send to [tengstrom@mnlegion.org](mailto:tengstrom@mnlegion.org) or in the mail to the Department of Minnesota.

graduate of the Naval Academy and flew MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopters. The heavy-lift-helicopter unit he commanded was deployed to Persian Gulf waters twice during the Iraq War. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

**Huls, Thomas J.**, 74, Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, died June 13, 2020. He was a member of St. Stephen Post 221.

**Janke, Vern D.**, 91, Army veteran of the Korean War, died June 28, 2020. He was in the infantry and received two Bronze Stars. He was a member of Wheaton Post 80.

**Johnson, Dennis E.**, 75, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died May 4, 2020. He served three tours in Vietnam, in addition to time spent in Korea and Germany. He was a mechanic and equipment repairman. He was a member of Winona Post 9.

**Johnsrud, Donald P.**, 93, Army veteran of the Korean era, died June 22, 2020. He was a 46-year member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Knowles, Dennis L.**, 73, Army veteran of Vietnam, died June 24, 2020. He was a 42-year member of Park Rapids Post 212.

**Kretlow, Ronald R.**, 77, Navy veteran of the Vietnam era, died June 28, 2020. He had three terms as first vice commander and served on the Honor Guard for more than 20 years. He was a member of Deerwood Post 557.

**LaFond, John E.**, 76, Air Force veteran of the Vietnam era, died May 7, 2020. He was a member of Le Sueur Post 55.

**Lindquist, Leslie W.**, 79, Army veteran of the Vietnam era, died June 14, 2020. He was a 49-year member of Cambridge Post 290.

**Listal, Glenn M.**, 72, Army veteran of the Vietnam War, died June 5, 2020. He was a 49-year member of Waite Park Post 428.

**Lonneman, Raymond C.**, 97, Army veteran during World War II, died June 15, 2020. He was a 42-year member of Lismore Post 636.

**Madetzke, Robert**, 76, Army veteran of the Vietnam era, died July 8, 2020. He was stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, Fort Gordon, Georgia, and Fort Wainwright, Alaska. He was a member of Marshall Post 113.

**Makela, Kenneth**, 83, Army veteran of the Korean War, died June 29, 2020. He was a member of Cloquet Post 262.

**McGoven, Robert**, 81, Marine veteran from the Korean era, died July 9, 2020. He was a past Post commander at East Grand Forks Post 157.

**McGraw, Jean**, 83, Navy veteran of Vietnam, died June 3, 2020. He was a 38-year member of Bloomington Post 550.

**Mollenhauer, Allen E.**, 93, Army Air Forces veteran of World War II, died April 27, 2020. He was an MP in Germany. He was a member of Le Sueur Post 55.

**Naab, Kenneth L.**, 83, Navy veteran of Korea and Vietnam eras, died June 10, 2020. He was a 57-year member of Wood Lake Post 556.

**Novacinski, Walter**, 91, Army veteran of World War II, died June 19, 2020. He was a 67-year member of Cloquet Post 262.

**Olson, Earl E.**, 84, Army National Guard veteran of the Vietnam era, died June 27, 2020. He was a member of Hutchinson Post 96.

**Paul, Gerald L.**, 84, Army veteran of the Korean era, died May 21, 2020. He was a member of Bemidji Post 14.

**Peterson, Archie A.**, 82, Air Force veteran of the Korean era, died May 5, 2020. He was a member of Backus Post 368.

**Pflughoeft, LaVern W.**, 74, Army veteran of the Vietnam era, died May 19, 2020. He trained troops at Fort Bliss for Vietnam duty. He was a member of Winona Post 9.

**Pinckney, D.C. "Dick,"** 100, Army veteran of World War II, died June 22, 2020. He served with an artillery unit in Europe. He was a 76-year member of Tyler Post 185.

**Priebe, Bernard A.**, 92, Army veteran of the Korean era, died June 26, 2020. He was a 68-year member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Rahn, Lawrence G.A.**, 94, Army veteran of World War II, died Jan. 30, 2020. He served with the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment in Japan. He was a 35-year member of Swanville Post 313.

**Sands, James N.**, 87, Army veteran of the Korean era, died June 6, 2020. He was stationed at the Army Port of Whittier in Alaska. He was a 47-year member of Kasson Post 333.

**Silvers, Edward R. "Shorty,"** 87, Army veteran of the Korean era, died June 22, 2020. He was a 45-year member of Waite Park Post 428.

**St. Michel, E. Jerry**, 89, Navy veteran of the Korean War, died June 27, 2020. He was 8th District commander 1993-94 and again 2013-14. He was a Department vice commander 1996-97. He was a 54-year member of Grand Rapids Post 60.

**Steffen, Leon J.**, 82., Army National Guard veteran of the Korean era and Air Force veteran, died July 9, 2020. He was a member of Albert Lea Post 56.

**Stewart, Ray Thomas**, 88, Army veteran of World War II, died July 4, 2020. He was stationed in Germany, then Paris during postwar occupations. He was a member of Park Rapids Post 212.

**Storby, LeRoy "Lee" T.**, 92, Army veteran of World War II, died June 20, 2020. He was a 39-year member of Waseca Post 228.

**Thomas, Byron L. "Tank,"** 82, Army veteran of the Korean era, died Feb. 28, 2020. He was a 45-year member of Albany Post 482.

**Tietje, Donald E.**, 83, Army veteran of the Korean era, died July 9, 2020. He was a member of Ceylon Post 529.

**Tri, Robert J.**, 94, Army veteran of World War II, died July 10, 2020. He served with both the 77th Infantry Division and the 11th Airborne Division in the Pacific. He was a 66-year member of Mazeppa Post 588.

**Umphey, Douglas**, 86, an Army veteran of the Korean War, died June 29, 2020. He was a member of East Grand Forks Post 157.

**Voss, Harry F.**, 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died July 12, 2020. He was a member of North St. Paul Post 39.

**Wedin, Rodney "Rocky,"** 88, Army veteran of the Korean era, died April 27, 2020. He served on the Department American Legion Baseball Committee as District 2 chairman for 25-plus years. The Minnesota Div. II Sportsmanship Trophy is named for him. He was a 67-year member of Wells Post 210.

**Wigton, Clarence E. Jr.**, 71, Air Force veteran who served two terms in Vietnam, died March 16, 2020. He was a member of Redwood Falls Post 38.

## Department of Corrections

Typographical errors left off two first names. Here are corrected reprints:

**Marquardt, Ralph K.**, 89, Army veteran of the Korean War, died May 26, 2020. He was a 53-year member of Dodge Center Post 384.

**Fieldsend, Richard J.**, 86, Army veteran of Korea, died June 5, 2020. He was a 44-year member of Park Rapids Post 212.

There were questions on deadline last month over when the Air Force, though separated from the Army, began calling the Soldier's Medal by the name Airman's Medal. Since then, we have found an answer. The Air Force separated from the Army in September 1947. However, it continued to award the Soldier's Medal. The Airman's Medal replaced it in August 1956. As a result, we are correcting an obituary:

**Kinnan, Robert**, 89, Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died March 18, 2020. He was awarded the Soldier's Medal for saving his crew. He was a 33-year member of Crosslake Post 500.

# The VA secretary is plain wrong about Agent Orange illnesses

After years of research and reports released to VA from the National Academics of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, or NASEM on Agent Orange-linked diseases, the VA secretary denies adding three conditions noting significant concerns and limitations with their findings.

Secretary Robert Wilkie's indecisiveness to add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson's to the list of Agent Orange-related illnesses has led to further delays in veterans receiving health care and disability payments.

The cost to add these three conditions could be between \$11.2 billion and \$15.2 billion, which I believe is why the secretary decided to administer an internal study of these conditions to determine if they can find correlation between these conditions and Agent Orange.

In my opinion, it has been just another delay in taking care of those who have borne the battle.

Well, secretary, your time is up; our Vietnam veterans are done waiting 50 years to be taken care of.

On July 22, 2020, the Senate advanced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization

## VA & Rehabilitation

Jeremy Wolfsteller



Act that would force the Department of Veterans Affairs to expand benefits for more Agent Orange-linked diseases, bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson's.

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Montana, ranking member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, proposed the amendment to the annual defense spending bill, and on Wednesday it received more than the 60 votes needed to make it into the massive must-pass omnibus annual bill that sets the budget, and some policy, for the Defense Department.

Since the bill is all but guaranteed to pass, it's prime real estate for major military and veterans' legislation, including on toxic exposure.

"Justice is long overdue for the veterans currently suffering and dying. This administration has refused to expand the list of presumptive conditions. They do not seem to think exposure to these toxic chemicals in Vietnam is a cost of war. Let me tell you — they're wrong, and it is," Tester said on the Senate floor

before the vote.

The Senate voted 94-6, with six Republicans voting against it — Mike Braun of Indiana, John Kennedy of Louisiana, Rand Paul of Kentucky, Rick Scott of Florida, Mike Lee of Utah and Ted Cruz of Texas.

Once these conditions are added to the Agent Orange presumptive illness list, VA will first have to add it to the CFR and provide a public comment period. Hopefully, we can expect these conditions to go into effect sometime around the first of the year but only time will tell.

Another question is, will veterans who filled for these illnesses that have been previously denied be entitled to retro pay?

Jeremy Wolfsteller is the Department of Minnesota service officer. His email is [jwolfsteller@mnlegion.org](mailto:jwolfsteller@mnlegion.org).

# Question: When is it fine to be political, and when is it wise to be nonpolitical?

## Judge Advocate

Greg Colby



I have received a number of calls and emails over the last couple of months about political activity.

Can my Post sponsor a talk by our local legislative candidate? Is it OK for any leader of The American Legion to urge members to support a cause or a candidate? One of our Post members wants to be active in this fall's political campaign, but he is worried that his membership in The American Legion prohibits that.

The American Legion is non-political. Our National constitution as well as our Department constitution say the same thing at Article 2, Section 2: *The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles or for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.*

That looks pretty straightforward, but it does call for further discussion.

Janet Wilson, a former Department commander of California and a National committeeman, wrote this:

"The National Charter, approved by Congress, stipulates The American Legion as an organization is nonpolitical, which has been interpreted by the National judge advocate as 'nonpartisan.' Therefore, The American Legion as an organization is prohibited from contributing, helping or endorsing a candidate. However, a member as a private citizen, and not representing our organization, can

employ whatever legal and ethical means he or she deems fit to advance his or her candidate."

Ms. Wilson also talked about the appropriate wear of American Legion caps and gear at political events. The American Legion cap is considered the official American Legion uniform. It is not an individual American Legion member's decision on appropriate usage of the cap or emblem. If attending a political event, The American Legion cap, or any clothing with our emblem visible, should be removed before the event so as not to imply endorsement by The American Legion.

When using Post facilities to host political candidates, a Post should remove the American Legion flag and emblem to avoid the impression of endorsement. The American Legion does not and never has endorsed political candidates. Therefore, candidates for all parties must be presented with an equal opportunity at the same time to use Post facilities on the same terms and conditions as other competing candidates. In addition, be wary of the danger of your Post officers or commander being photographed with any political candidate *during election season*. A photograph can look like an endorsement.

The hardest part in all of this is talking with friends and

family and expressing your opinion.

Each of us wants what we believe is best for our country, state and community. Each of us from time to time vents on this issue or that event.

But if we want to give the impression to the public that we are indeed neutral, we need to be careful when and where our opinions are expressed — and know your audience.

When wearing an American Legion cap especially at an American Legion event, please be careful during this political season to not express political opinions that can be overheard and wrongly interpreted. The officers of the Department are viewed as leaders in the organization and you need to take this advice to heart as well.

The American Legion values its independence and effectiveness on veterans' issues. This stance is best maintained by neutrality on individual candidates or political parties. The American Legion by legal definition is nonpartisan and supports only legislative issues that adhere to our Four Pillars.

Greg Colby is the judge advocate for The American Legion Department of Minnesota.

# What's happening?

Continued from Page 5

- 1st and 3rd Department Vice Commander Pat Logan: [pwlogan@comcast.net](mailto:pwlogan@comcast.net)
- 2nd and 7th Department Vice Commander Harold "Hal" Meyer: [hal.meyer@frontiernet.net](mailto:hal.meyer@frontiernet.net)
- 4th and 5th Department Vice Commander Teresa Ash: [mrsash1@yahoo.com](mailto:mrsash1@yahoo.com)
- 6th and 9th Department Vice Commander Tim Haugen: [timhaugen74@gmail.com](mailto:timhaugen74@gmail.com)
- 8th and 10 Department Vice Commander Bob Locker: [lockerrg@comcast.net](mailto:lockerrg@comcast.net)



**World War II Navy veteran Art Lenius, a life member of Minneapolis Post 1, is pictured with Rich Neuwirth, fellow Post 1 member and barber, after receiving a haircut from him in preparation for his 100th birthday July 28.**

only 5-inch guns, compared to the 16-inchers they were up against," Al said.

Following Sonar School, Art served aboard the USS Doran DD-634, and the USS John C. Butler DE-339, with service in the Atlantic, Pacific and Mediterranean.

He currently resides in Bloomington. Because of COVID-19, a small family celebration of his birth was planned.

## Party to celebrate 100th birthday

MINNEAPOLIS — World War II Navy veteran Art Lenius was born in Frazee and served from February 1942 until December 1945, including the Phillipine Liberation, receiving the Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Unit Citation, Good Conduct Medal, European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with two stars, and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with five stars.

His son, Al, said that his father "did not expect to make it out alive" during the Battle of Samar in the Phillipine Sea in 1944, one of the bloodiest conflicts of the War, and one of the largest naval operations in history.

"They were in tin cans, they called them, with

# Legion Riders will be at Camporee

Greetings American Legion Family!

Wow, I can't believe it is August already. It seems like the summer just started. I am so glad to see more and more events happening within our Legion Family.

We will get through this and be better for it. I really do miss seeing all of you though. I can't wait to see all of you in person, and not on a screen in your pajamas.

As of this writing, it looks like Camporee at Legionville is going to happen. It will be great to see everyone in person. Even if we have to be social distancing.

We will also be having our Minnesota American Legion

## Legion Riders

Paul Hassing



We will be calling for a Riders meeting with all of the District representatives to be held at the ROMP, so be looking for it. We have many things to go over.

Keep smiling, and we'll all get through this together.

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

Riders ROMP at Legionville on the third weekend of September. It should be a great time. Please come join us.



## The American Legion Department of Minnesota 2021 District Membership Report as of Jul 22, 2020

District	Commander	New 2021	PUFL 2021	Online Ren 2021	Trad Ren 2021	Paid 2021	HQ Trans 2021	Total Mbr 2021	Goal 2021	%Goal	HQ Trans 2020 (As of)	Total Mbr 2020 (As of)
01	DALE P WELLIK	0	850	244	906	2,000	0	2,000	0	0.00	0	1,237
02	BRADLEY PAGEL	2	639	159	200	1,000	0	1,000	0	0.00	0	952
03	LINDA DVORAK	5	1,533	533	890	2,961	4	2,965	0	0.00	1	2,229
04	JOSEPH M JANSEN	0	283	76	213	572	1	573	0	0.00	0	398
05	WADE A LARSON	0	296	122	113	531	0	531	0	0.00	0	472
06	PAUL D EDWARDS	6	1,085	351	1,121	2,563	1	2,564	0	0.00	0	1,722
07	DEAN KNUTSON	0	690	118	269	1,077	0	1,077	0	0.00	1	885
08	GERRIANNE KOSKINEN	1	312	135	337	785	0	785	0	0.00	0	442
09	STEVEN G SUNDSTROM	4	544	189	750	1,487	0	1,487	0	0.00	1	1,050
10	THOMAS H ALLEN	6	894	397	659	1,956	0	1,956	0	0.00	0	1,476
99		0	169	126	98	393	0	393	0	0.00	0	640
<b>Total:</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>7,295</b>	<b>2,450</b>	<b>5,556</b>	<b>15,325</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15,331</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11,503</b>



Members of the 2nd District Family present a check for \$7,519 to pay for outdoor equipment, such as patio furniture, a grill, possibly even horseshoe pits, for Eagle's Healing Nest Redwood Falls on July 18. From left are Honorary Junior President Anastasia Donnelly, SAL Commander Russ Lietzke, Auxiliary President Robin Olson, Legion Commander Brad Pagel, Nest Superintendent Tracy Havrilla, and Nest staff member Bill Simmons.

By Tim Engstrom

REDWOOD FALLS — Robin Olson attended an American Legion Fall Conference in Marshall in 2018 where Melony Butler spoke to members of the Legion and the Auxiliary. Butler is the head of Eagle's Healing Nest in Sauk Centre.

In addition to speaking about how the Nest helps veterans recover from the invisible wounds of war, Butler mentioned an expansion to a second Eagle's Healing Nest in Redwood Falls.

This location would be a next step, the place veterans recovering from addiction and other troubles go after they are done at the Sauk Centre campus.

That was something Olson, of Winnebago Unit 82, could get behind. She was going to be president of the 2nd District Auxiliary, and she had found her project.

"My heart is with the younger veterans," Olson said. "If we don't take care of younger veterans, who's going to take the place of the older veterans?"

# Legion Family joins forces in the 2nd District

Organizations come together to benefit independent living for veterans in Redwood Falls



This is a glimpse into a lived-in standard one-bedroom apartment. Residents pay their own rent.



Tracy Havrilla with Eagle's Healing Nest Redwood Falls stands in a room where the veterans living there gather to talk.



Tracy Havrilla kisses Brad Pagel during an outside photo pose on July 18. The sign says, "Promises Made ... Promises Kept."



This is an image of a vacant studio apartment in the facility. The apartments opened to tenants in September 2019.

She approached 2nd District Legion Commander Brad Pagel about the idea, and he thought it was great. Then 2nd District SAL Commander Russ Lietzke joined. So did Anastasia Donnelly, honorary president of the 2nd District Junior Auxiliary.

First, they asked officials at the Luverne Veterans Home if they focused their efforts elsewhere for a bit, and they were fine with it.

But there were a number of Legion Family members who were iffy about it, said Olson, who presently is the 2nd District Auxiliary president. It was new, and Butler's comments had turned off some members.

"Put that aside," Olson said, "and the Eagle's Healing Nest still is doing the right thing. They still are serving young veterans who are not finding help anywhere else."

What's more, it was local, and people in the 2nd District liked that. They got behind it, she said. It was the District project for 2019-20 and will be again for 2020-21.

On Saturday, July 18, the 2nd District Legion Family presented its project for the coming year, complete with a performance by country singer Connie Lee.

And a check for \$7,519 for outdoor patio equipment, signed by Olson, Pagel, Lietzke and Donnelly.

Olson and her husband, Randy, donated a firepit. Lietzke (also a Legionnaire with Bricelyn Post 165) and his wife, Sarah, donated a cornhole game. The Minnesota Lake Auxiliary and DAV gave quilts. The Legion Jr. Auxiliary gave household supplies. Tony Downs Foods in Madelia donated 30 cases of canned food.

Eagle's Healing Nest Redwood Falls Superintendent Tracy Havrilla was on hand to receive the check and gifts. He is a Legion member with Redwood Falls Post 38, along with staff members Bill Simmons and Ralph Knowlton.

He said the former assisted-living facility at 1011 E. Elm St. is a sober-free campus on 2 1/2 acres. The recovering veterans come from Eagle's Healing Nest Sauk Centre and can get jobs, stay sober and develop good financial habits while still surrounded by fellow vets.

"They will still have help with any issues they face," he said. "Where Uncle Sam falls short, that's where we step in."

To be sure, it is independent housing. The veterans are responsible for rent. There is drug and alcohol testing when needed, Havrilla said. A studio apartment is \$525 a month, while a standard one-bedroom apartment is \$904. There are 10 studios, 24 standards.

There are some common areas, too. There is a laundry room. There is a kitchen with a nearby large dining room. Families visit and dine together there, without any extra charge.

There is an open area with chairs at the end of one hallway where the veterans have meetings to talk.

The building was vacant. The former owner liked veterans and donated it to the Eagle's Healing Nest two years ago. Havrilla said it opened for veterans housing in September 2019.

"The Legion has been awesome," he said. "They have given lots of help to the Eagle's Healing Nest."

He also credited Camp Ripley for donating dorm fridges.

"The best thing about it," said Randy Olson, membership director for the 2nd District, "is this is the first time all four have done their projects together. They usual have separate projects."

The Legion Family next summer hopes to donate playground equipment for the children of veterans staying there during visitation.

# Only your battle buddy could wash off mark

Continued from Page 1

Both grandfathers of Keith Deutsch had served in the military. His father, Ron, died when Keith was 10. So after he graduated from New Prague High School in 2002, he figured the Army Reserve would be a good route for him.

"I didn't get good grades unless I liked the class," he said.

Recall that the class of 2002 is the one that watched the Twin Towers fall on Sept. 11, 2001. He was somewhat patriotic for a high school kid, like his classmates, and then the military marketing forces ramped up that year, and recruiters were everywhere. One day, the Army recruiter offered to buy him lunch.

"I think he saw on my face I was going to join," Deutsch said. "He told me, 'The Army takes the smarter guys who want to fight. If you just want to fight, you go be a Marine.'"

He went to basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where he was a squad leader in the platoon and got promoted to E-2 private.

He went to advanced individual training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. His military occupational specialty was 62E — heavy equipment operator. He figured the skills would be good at his uncle's business, Deutsch Construction.

At AIT, there formed two rival groups in his platoon, and on the last night at Leonard Wood, one guy on fire watch wasn't doing his job, or much of anything, and Deutsch called him out on it. They got in a fistfight, and the drill sergeants smoked Deutsch for starting it. They made Deutsch hold an M-60 machine gun, about 23 pounds unloaded, all night long without sleep. He held it over his head, in front of him, on his shoulders, whatever he could do.

Though tired the next day, he got through it and learned a lesson.

Back home, he joined his Reserve unit, the Mankato company of the 367th Engineer Battalion. He went to a single drill, and before the second one, he got a call. He was going to Iraq.

"I never saw them again," Deutsch said. "When they said they needed a guy, they pulled me. I was the newest. I had hardly any gear yet," he said.

He had orders to report to MEPS in Minneapolis. He had been cross-leveled to an engineer unit in Boulder, Colorado, A Company of the 244th Engineering Battalion. The entire battalion, headquartered in Denver, was being activated for war.

All their trucks were green with rag sides. They spent three or four months painting and packing, then getting it all on miles-long trains.

They flew commercial flights to Kuwait, and each soldier was handed a 2 1/2-liter water bottle. Nobody thought they needed it. But it was well above 100 degrees outside. An hour later, they wanted more.

He recalls the equipment was shipped to Qatar, and they had to wait for it to arrive in Kuwait. The soldiers played Risk, horseshoes or cards during downtimes. They even participated in a 5K run to celebrate the Army's birthday on June 14.

Engineers build stuff, and now that the Iraqi military was defeated and their gear had arrived, they began building forward operating bases (FOBs) in Iraq. Deutsch and his friends built the original berms and dining facilities. They mainly ate Meals, Ready-to-Eat, and didn't get the luxuries of a base themselves.

"It was very rudimentary at the time," he said.

They avoided firefights by driving around the big cities, Deutsch said.

"Ninety percent of the time we were



Keith Deutch sits on the porch of the family farm just north of New Prague.

being fired upon by people not knowing what they were doing," he said.

Medics on the battlefield could use only a limited amount of blood on a single patient in case others needed blood, so the Army had a simple solution to save lives.

Back when Deutsch's unit was in Colorado, the CO of the battalion got everyone together in their Class A uniforms for dining out and drinks in Colorado Springs, but first, the sergeants wrote everyone's blood type on their foreheads in black marker and told them to pair up. Only your battle buddy could wash off the marker.

Deutsch paired up with Crystal Woolen. They both are A negative. They remain friends to this day.

"She is like a sister to me." Woolen, an Army brat born in Germany who has lived all over the States, now works for the VA in Grand Junction, Colorado.

The gunfire was coming from the passenger side of the convoy. Woolen drove the deuce at the rear of the convoy. The platoon lieutenant sat in the passenger seat.

There were protective mounds on both sides of the route.

"It was the perfect kill zone," Woolen said.

She said Lawton sat in the passenger side of the lead vehicle, where an officer typically sits, because he insisted it would be safer for the LT.

Deutsch sat by the shut tailgate with his right leg up next to it. He could see the enemy was firing from 500 to 800 yards away, and he fired back as the convoy continued moving.

He had tracers, making his shots visible, and he believes he got some of them.

"I saw my rounds hitting the dirt to the left of them, and I could see my tracers. I remember training my rounds to the right, and I was stopping them. Then a ball of light hit my truck."

It was a rocket-propelled grenade. "I had no feeling. No senses. I couldn't hear, touch, taste, feel or smell, but I could think, and I couldn't find my weapon."

He regained some sense of feeling and kept searching for his SAW. Then his hearing returned, followed by sight. He started shouting for Big Mac, another 62E whose name was Tyler McWilliams. He was from Colorado.

"Big Mac! They blew my leg off." "Oh [expletive]!"

Woolen described the RPG blast. "It felt like my deuce lifted off

the ground while it still had forward motion," she said.

Deutsch has foggy memories of what happened. Woolen said Deutsch had a severed leg, held on by the skin. McWilliams tied a tourniquet with a pillow case and a screwdriver.

"If he hadn't tied the tourniquet on it, I don't think he would have made it," Woolen said.

She also described an RPG smashing the glass of Sgt. Mike Webbington's truck, skidding off of his Kevlar helmet, leaving glass in his face, then exploding on an M-916 trailer.

"Who takes an RPG to the head and lives?" she asked.

A couple of other soldiers had injuries, too.

The convoy reached an area where the landscape was wide open and stopped in a herringbone formation to assess damage.

The platoon had a trained medic, and

that guy, Ryan Anderson, had been in the truck in front of Deutsch's. Woolen had to hitch Lawton's Humvee to the back of her deuce, and she saw Lawton looked dead but NCOs were not saying anything as they applied pressure to Lawton's wound anyway, so soldiers' efforts focused on the wounded.

Woolen said they called for a chopper and couldn't get one, so a medevac Humvee would have to do. They waited. She can't recall the time it took.

Deutsch was in that Humvee headed to a combat support hospital, like a "MASH" unit but these days known as "CSH" and pronounced like "cash." It was 45 minutes away at FOB Warhorse.

Lawton was in the same Humvee, in the stretcher above him.

At one point in the ride, Lawton's arm dropped down, and Deutsch knew it was him by the wedding ring. He could see the 41-year-old was dead.

That spurred Deutsch to remain alive.

"Those were the dreams I had a hard time with, but now it is one of my favorite memories. One of his last moves was to save my life," Deutsch said.

He said CSH unit was air-conditioned, or at least the best attempt at it in spite of the desert heat, and Deutsch told a female major that it was cold in there. She told him it was 90 degrees in the hospital.

The doctors and nurses stabilized him, and his entire unit got to come by and say goodbye. Though sedated, he was glad to have closure because up until that time he still had been asking for his weapon.

Deutsch went from Iraq to Kuwait to Germany to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

Much of the time, he was sedated, so the memory isn't clear, but he thinks he got his amputation at Walter Reed. He clearly remembers the last feeling his leg had — a doctor sliding his boot off his foot. And he knows for sure he received an epidural at Walter Reed. His lower half went numb, and he could finally sleep.

He recalls the doctor telling him he would make it, but, in general, time wasn't linear, he said.

"I didn't say no to the little red button," Deutsch said.

The amputation went above the knee, and he was told it healed quickly and well. They also removed shrapnel from his intestines.

At Walter Reed, he met a guy named Kirk Bauer, with Disabled Sports USA. He had lost a leg above the knee during combat, like Deutsch, only in Vietnam. Bauer knew Deutsch liked the slopes and told him he could return through skiing.

Undeterred, Deutsch said he would be snowboarding instead.

The medical staff put the war wounded in a room with tape marks on the floor for President George W. Bush. The patients were left there without access to nurses or medications. They waited and waited and began pushing buttons and no one came.

Finally, Bush arrives. Deutsch is worried that he will break down and cry and his colostomy bag is filling up. He gets to Deutsch, and they shake hands and everything goes fine except the awful look on his face, and all patients' faces.

Bush asks Deutsch's mother, Judy, what was going on.

She replied, "Do you want to know the truth?"

Of course, the president said.

Judy told him something like: "These boys are accustomed to having nurses watch over them 24 hours a day and have been in the room for four hours waiting for you with no help."

"Oh, Judy," Bush said. "That's when you can tell me to get the [expletive] out."

Bush stepped out and yelled sharply, "Hey!" Then he ordered the staff to care for the wounded immediately. The wounded men were grateful.

In addition to a Purple Heart Medal, Bush gave Deutsch a presidential coin. He lost it some years later at a speaking engagement. He passed the coin around the room for people to see and someone pocketed it.

Minnesota Sen. Mark Dayton also visited Deutsch at Walter Reed. Judy asked Dayton if it would be possible to transfer her son to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

Deutsch was on a flight the very next day.

He was at the Minneapolis VA for a month or so, then released. He was back



Keith Deutsch stands on the tailgate of his Jeep on July 17.

Continued on Page 9

**Continued from Page 8**

home, and it was at the Minneapolis VA that he learned how to walk again and take care of himself again.

"The VA took exceptional care of me," he said.

At 15, Deutsch had been a snowboard instructor at Buck Hill. Three months after his injury, there he was, at the top of Buck Hill. He sat there a long time and eventually got the nerve to go down.

He failed miserably.

"I felt pretty devastated at the time. I used to own the hill. Now I am blocking people getting off the lift," he said.

He kept doing it, though. Again and again and again.

He took that Bauer guy up on his offer and went skiing in Breckenridge, where he made great advancements.

He grew weary of his sisters and mother paying so much attention to him, so he moved to Las Vegas and ended up student-teaching horticulture. He got involved with the snowboarding culture out West. People heard about this above-the-knee amputee who is trying to snowboard, something novel at the time, and he kept getting invited places.

At an adaptive recreation outdoor center in Idado, he figured out how to attach a spade shovel handle to his boot binding so he could stand up again.

"When I bent my knee, I used my elbow pushing on the cane to stand up again," Deutsch said.

One day, a guy named Jarem Fry came up to him with a device he created, the XT9, and asked Deutsch to

try it. This prosthetic allowed above-the-knee amputee to kneebord.

"That's were it really took off," Deutsch said.

Fry never asked for it back.

"I started hitting big jumps with it. I was good at snowboarding before I lost my leg, and I wanted to be good at it again," Deutsch said.

After about two or three years in Vegas, his motorcycle struck a car and he was in a coma for 10 days.

He recovered and moved to Denver where his brother lived. Meanwhile, snowboarding kept growing as a sport, and so was adaptive snowboarding — athletes with prosthetics.

In 2007, 08 and 09, he raced in the X Games.

In 2009, he knew if he finished strong, he might win. He got up his speed, then lost speed on a bad surface, right before hitting the jump. He had a big spin but knew he wasn't going to hit the down ramp. He always favored bashing his fake leg rather than the real one, so he leaned that way. He ended up crashing and tumbling, "and the crowd just goes nuts."

On the eve of the 2010 X Games at Copper Mountain, this guy came up to him. His name was Mike Schultz. He was a snowmobile racer with a prosthetic leg from Minnesota. He invented a new leg called the Moto Knee.

No way was Deutsch going to try this thing on. It was the night before the X Games, after all.

Schultz begged him to make just one run with it. Just one. Deutsch did and loved it so much he wore it the next day. He became the 2010 X Games



**A porch sign indicates the family in birth order: mother Judy, daughter Jessica, son Nick, son Keith, daughter Alyssa and daughter Melanie.**

national champion.

Schultz got into snowboarding, too, and later became a Paralympian. He is famously known as Monster Mike Schultz. Deutsch and Schultz have hopped out of helicopters together in British Columbia.

Deutsch has lots of ribbons and awards and is recognized as a pioneer of adaptive snowboarding.

The Paralympics added adaptive snowboarding in 2012, but Deutsch never got to be a Paralympian. Instead, he became a father and left snowboarding. His daughter, Ava, was born in 2011.

Being a national champion snowboarder doesn't pay the bills. Deutsch took a job in the

aerospace industry for a military contractor, got married and purchased a house across the street from Columbine High School in Littleton. The company was designing components for NASA and for satellites.

The couple split three years later, and they share custody of Ava. Deutsch left his job and after a couple years began writing a book about his experiences. It is called "Born STUBborn," and it is available for purchase on Amazon.

He writes: "What I share with you is my perspective on the story of the creation of the sport of Paralympic snowboarding, from its infancy into a blossoming sport, and then on into a regimented and structured professional business."

He adds: "Along the way I got to

hug Oprah, I met Fergie, and I ran into the beautiful Miss Lindsey Vonn at an A-list party in New York at Carnegie Hall. I was there to present Cher her Lifetime Achievement Award."

Really? Yes. Google it.

There is a photo of Sgt. Keith Deutsch presenting Cher with the award during the Glamour Magazine 2010 Women of the Year Gala at Carnegie Hall. It is owned by Getty Images.

He was getting paid for public speaking to kids in schools and getting good reviews for his talks — then schools closed because of COVID-19.

Deutsch moved back to the family farm north of New Prague in late March with Ava, now 8.

"I am hoping to find more opportunity in Minnesota than I did in Colorado," he said.

Judy was planning to sell the farm, and he is interested in buying it. For now, he is working on motorcycles, and he hopes to expand it into a business.

He said it would have the same name as the one his father owned: Ron's Cycle Shop.

He was a member of The American Legion out in Colorado and now is a member of New Prague Post 45. He is enjoying life again in the Land of 10,000 Lakes.

Woolen, though living in western Colorado, remains protective of Deutsch. She didn't want anyone exploiting his story.

"We're still very close friends. We're still battles. That doesn't change," she said.

## Should Department conventions end on Sundays?

### Continued from Page 1

71 is chairman of the Finance Committee.

- Eugene Leifeld of Red Wing Post 54 is the president of Legionville School Safety Patrol Training Center Inc.

- Raymond Eiden of Minneapolis Post 555 is on the Brain Science Foundation Committee. The foundation's presidency is vacant, and the committee will select a president at its fall meeting.

- Gary H. Olson of Moorhead Post 21 is on the National Security/Foreign Relations Committee.

- Lynn Lyons of Richfield Post 435 is on the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee.

- Pam Krill of Fairmont Post 36 and Ryan Sabinish of Albert Lea Post 56 are on the Strategic Planning Committee.

Training Committee is new, too, and the DEC formed it at the March meeting. The Ad Hoc COVID-19 Committee was formed in April.

There were no resolutions on the table for consideration.

Heads of each committee gave a report, much similar to what was printed in the annual reports of the July issue. There was some discussion on a few topics.

### Should conventions change days?

Phil Bellefeuille, chairman of the Convention Corp., said the Fall Conference remains on track for Oct. 22-24 at Breezy Point Resort, hosted by Niswaga Post 627.

The 2021 Department Convention is slated for July 2021 at Jackpot Junction Casino, hosted by Redwood Falls Post



**Officers for the coming year raise their hands over the Zoom video conferencing platform. This was one page out of three of members attending the DEC meeting July 18.**

38. Detroit Lakes Post 15 passed a motion to host the 2021 Fall Conference, he said, and the committee awaits the bid letter.

The annual convention for the Department of Minnesota, he noted, has been Wednesday through Saturday, and he proposed a survey be placed in The Minnesota Legionnaire to see whether members would prefer Thursday through Sunday.

Past National Commander Dan Ludwig said most Departments hold them ending on Sunday so working members can attend without spending vacation hours.

"We are about the only Department that does it this way," he said. "Maybe one or two others. The vast majority do it Thursday to Sunday."

Second District Commander

Brad Pagel said he knows two young Legion members who are recently out of the National Guard.

"They are more likely to show up on a Friday afternoon than they are on a Wednesday," he said.

Dvorak said he will explore the idea further.

Bellefeuille also proposed reducing committee meetings. One notion was not meeting if there are no resolutions to bring up.

Vice Commander Teresa Ash said committee meetings are ways to learn about action taken, too.

"I don't think we should stop the committee from meeting because it's more than just resolutions," she said.

Dvorak noted committees

could meet via video conferencing prior to the convention.

### Membership had a good year

Membership Director Sy Fix gave a report filled with many positive trends in membership.

The Department of Minnesota was one of six Departments that maxed out on the money awarded for National's membership points program by meeting goals through the year, adding Posts and winning the Big 12 competition. That resulted in \$1,000 for the Department for computers.

Fix said Minnesota presently is 20th in the country for the 2020 membership year, with 93,881 percent.

"We are also 1,936 members behind last year, which is still

better than past years," he said.

He called on membership committees to work hard on transferring Post 1982 and Post 1982AD members.

"We need to get these folks into your Post before they start paying into the direct mail solicitation," he said. "That way, not only do you have their dues, but then they will count toward your goal for the year. If you wait too long and they pay into DMS, you won't get credit for them after the transfer. But just because they paid into DMS doesn't mean we still can't go get them."

Getting on board with MyLegion.org, he said, will assist. Training is available statewide to help each Post. Contact the District commander or District membership director for starters.

"Never, never be afraid to ask for help," Fix said.

### Zoom, Zoom, Zoom

Teresa Ash, chairwoman of the COVID-19 Committee, said its work has brought together the entire Legion Family and forged a partnership with Quilts of Valor. She thanked Fix for using the Membership Committee funds to purchase Zoom accounts for every District and for the

Department vice commanders.

Zoom is an online video conferencing program.

"A few districts are using Zoom to meet, and they have gained members using Zoom," Ash said.

She thanked the Minnesota American Legion Foundation for paying for Quilts of Honor to get a new machine and thanked committee member Randy Olson for his work coordinating the transportation of goods, from masks to food, across the state.

### Legionville beach

Eugene Leifeld, president of Legionville, said his people have been working on the beach after a donation of 147 yards of sand, which saved the camp around \$4,000. The camp held a second-ever garage sale July 23, 24 and 25.

### 2 charters turned in

Adjutant Mike Maxa reported two Posts turned in their charters with the proper papers and procedures — Heron Lake Post 224, as a result of the town's declining population, and St. Paul Post 583, which had been member-less for years.

The DEC accepted the charters.



**Legionville Safety Patrol Training Center is at 9544 Legionville Road, Brainerd.**

# Thank you, Wilfred

Quilts of Valor group  
in Balaton honors veteran  
with a touching ceremony

By Jenny Kirk  
Balaton Press Tribune

**B**ALATON — Wilfred Sanderson has experienced a lot in his 95 years, but the Korean War veteran and father of five sons still gets a little emotional when it comes to being thanked for his military service.

On Feb. 20, Pieces for Heroes — a local group affiliated with Quilts of Valor — presented a patriotic quilt and pillowcase to Sanderson at Lakeview Senior Housing in Balaton.

“Thank you,” Sanderson said after local presenter Carol Peterson draped the quilt over him. “It’s pretty nice. It looks like a lot of work went into it.”

Peterson said he was the one who deserves a big thank you.

“Our mission is to cover all nominated service members and veterans touched by war or conflict with a comforting quilt, honoring them for their service, sacrifice, honor and loyalty to our country,” Peterson said. “You served in the Korean War and you were nominated by (your son) Wayne, so it’s a privilege for us, Pieces for Heroes, to be here to fulfill that request. We hope this will bring you comfort and just know that somebody cares and thanks you for your service.”

Sgt. Wilfred Sanderson was a combat infantryman in Korea from September 1950 to June 1952. Her served with the 5th Regimental Combat Team and received the combat infantry badge.

“Thank you, Wilfred, for your service,” local quilter Lauren Thooft said. Along with Thooft and Peterson, local quilter Joy Jones was in attendance to present Sanderson with the special quilt.

“It worked out well,” Wilfred’s son, Wayne Sanderson, said. “(The volunteers) were very enthusiastic about presenting it. The quilt is beautiful. I can’t believe they put that together.”

Wayne Sanderson said he nominated his dad for the quilt after learning that his uncle had been a recent recipient.

“Dad’s brother showed me an article in the Tyler paper, where this

individual awarded (Lester) a quilt,” Wayne said. “Lester said, ‘You know, your dad actually served in a combat area.’ We thought if anybody deserves a quilt, he does. So, I contacted these gals and that’s all it took.”

The 66-year-old eldest son of Wilfred and the late Norma Sanderson understands the dedication, sacrifice and effort involved with serving in the military, having spent 24 years of his own life in the Army.

“This was kind of a big deal,” Wayne Sanderson said. “I just figured my dad deserved that.”

The Sanderson family moved to the Balaton area in 1965. All five sons graduated from Balaton High School.

“I lived on the east side of the county road, the Balaton district,” Wilfred said. “If I’d have been on the other side of the country road, I’d have been in the Tyler District. So, my five boys graduated from Balaton.”

Wayne Sanderson graduated in 1972, followed by Craig (1974), Calvin (1975), Michael (1977) and Jerry (1983).

“I stay pretty active,” Wayne said. “Since I’ve been retired, I keep awfully busy. I do a lot of volunteering for disabled veterans in Hutchinson. We pick up clothing and donate that. Then I drive veterans to medical appointments. I stay busy doing that.”

Longevity seems to run in the family for the Sanderson men.

“In Dad’s family, there were three boys and four girls,” Wayne Sanderson said. “All the girls have passed away — they were much younger when they passed away — and all the boys are still up and running. Dad is doing pretty well. But you should see his brother (Lester) at 98. You can sit down and have a conversation. And his third brother (Victor) is in Flandreau, South Dakota. He was a farmer all his life and retired a number of years ago. He’s in his 80s and doing well.”

Quilts of Valor started in 2003, after founder Catherine Roberts, whose son, Nat, was deployed in Iraq, had a dream one night. The message of that dream was that quilts wrapped around hurting



Photos by Jenny Kirk/Balaton Press Tribune

**Local quilting volunteer Carol Peterson respectfully presents Army veteran Wilfred Sanderson with a Quilts of Valor offering on Feb. 20 at Lakeview Senior Housing in Balaton.**

soldiers and veterans created a sense of healing and hope for them.

The first recipient was a young soldier from Minnesota who had lost his leg in Iraq. The quilt was awarded in November 2003 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the Washington, D.C. area. The movement then spread across the nation and beyond.

Pieces for Heroes — one of nine Quilts of Valor groups in Minnesota and the only one in southwest Minnesota — is starting its third year.

“Nancy McClain is our group coordinator,” Peterson said. “She lives in Wood Lake, and she’s the one that got all of us into this. Several of us gals are from Russell, but we are actually out of the Marshall area.”

Jones said she believes the local group started with seven members but has since grown.

“I think there are 16 or 17 members now,” Jones said. “Some don’t come all the time, but that’s just how it goes. You can come and be there for however long you want. We meet the second and fourth Mondays of the month (at the Adult Community Center in Marshall).”

Wilfred Sanderson asked how long it took to make a quilt like his.

Peterson said it typically takes more than 40 hours.

“It takes from 40 to 50 hours from start to finish,” she said. “And it’s about \$250 to complete it, depending on size. I’m a beginner, but we have some very, very talented members.”

Peterson noted that the choice of fabric often is the key.

“They start out with a focal point and go from there,” Peterson said. “Lauren and Joy are really good, but I am still learning. You show up and sometimes you cut, sometimes you sew and sometimes you put labels on — there’s always something for everybody to do.”

In the three years Pieces for Heroes has been in operation, more than 90 quilts have been given to deserving men and women in the area.

“Nancy (McClain) told me that we’ve presented 93 quilts so far in the three years that we’ve been getting together,” Peterson said.

Several people congratulated Sanderson after he received his quilt.

“You had a nice day today,” Wilmes said to Wilfred. “Enjoy the quilt.”

Sanderson replied: “I will. Every day.”



**Ninety-five-year-old Korean War veteran Wilfred Sanderson, a recent Quilts of Valor recipient, poses with his son, Wayne Sanderson. Both are American Legion members at Ruthton Post 506.**



**Wilfred Sanderson’s shadowbox of military memories.**



**Quilts of Valor recipient Wilfred Sanderson (front) is pictured with (from left) his son, Wayne Sanderson, and Carol Peterson, Joy Jones and Lauren Thooft, who are volunteer members of Pieces for Heroes, a local Quilts of Valor group.**

# There is another virus in the U.S.

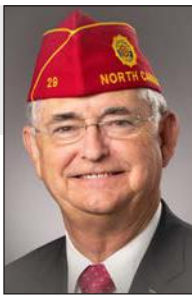
There is a virus in America that could cause more long-term destruction than COVID-19. Just as the novel coronavirus can quickly devastate a healthy body this other virus threatens lives, neighborhoods and infrastructures. No person or place is truly safe. It can embed itself inside a peaceful protest and turn it into a nightmare of violent rioting and retribution. It turns Americans against Americans. This virus is called anarchy.

Perhaps no one should be more concerned about this virus than those who justly fight for civil rights and equality. Their cause has been hijacked. George Floyd and Breonna Taylor receive only occasional mentions on the evening news while footage of statue-toppling, tear gas and batons dominates. One network's description of a live event will usually have the opposite perspective of another network. Division is a symptom of this virus and its cancer has reached a stage unseen since the Civil War. The patient is quickly approaching stage 4.

At our 1962 National Convention, American Legion delegates defined "Americanism" in such an eloquent manner that we still adhere to it. It stated that the essence of Americanism is class, religious and racial

## National Commander

James "Bill" Oxford



tolerance. Written as if it were a vaccine against our current anarchy virus, it further states "law and order are essential to the preservation of Americanism while lawlessness and violence are distinctly un-American."

That's worth repeating. "Lawlessness and violence are distinctly un-American." Peaceful protests against racism are just, admirable and constitutionally protected. It's OK if protests make people feel uncomfortable. A good protest is supposed to do that. But many people feel unsafe. This is what distinguishes protestors from anarchists and rioters.

Whether generated from the extreme left or the extreme right, the cracked skulls and burning buildings don't care. They are damaged, sometimes permanently.

Instead of fighting this virus like good scientists, public officials are failing us. People are being killed while local, state and federal agencies fight over jurisdiction. Add partisan politics to the growing list of symptoms.

Most police officers are brave

and honorable. Some are not and those who abuse their positions should be held accountable.

In the fog of a riot, it is sometimes difficult for officers to distinguish between a peaceful protestor and a violent anarchist. Again, police officers who commit crimes should be prosecuted. Same with a brick-throwing anarchist.

Federal agents are charged with enforcing federal law and protecting federal property. State and local law enforcement officers have parallel responsibilities in their respective areas.

Mayors, governors and the federal government must work as one when it comes to public safety. Agencies at every level must collaborate.

People are dying. The enemy is not each other. It's the violent anarchist. Unity is the cure.

*James "Bill" Oxford of North Carolina is the National Commander of The American Legion.*

# COVID affects the homes, cemeteries

The roller coaster ride of the coronavirus pandemic continues to impact the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

While we have increased numbers of attendees at services held at our State Veterans Cemeteries and started offering outdoor visits between residents and their family members in our homes, we recently learned of two positive COVID-19 cases at the veterans home in Silver Bay.

It's a reminder that we must stay diligent, follow all infection control procedures, wear a mask and practice social distancing.

## Veterans Homes

While many nursing homes in Minnesota have had positive COVID-19 cases, the Minnesota Veterans Homes have had a relatively small number of positive cases. Our Minneapolis home has had 24 resident cases, and we mourn the passing of 10 residents due to COVID-19.

Homes in Fergus Falls and Hastings have had zero cases. Until the past month, COVID cases only were at the Minneapolis home.

Silver Bay and Luverne were prepared for this situation and are taking all necessary precautions to keep residents and staff safe.

They:

- Developed a special isolation unit (if needed) to care for residents if they test positive for COVID-19.

- Continue to wear surgical masks and face shields which protects both residents and health care workers.

- Continue screening all staff for illness at the beginning of their shift and all residents

## Commissioner

Larry Herke



twice a day

When the pandemic hit our state in mid-March, our homes temporarily suspended admissions and when more of the pandemic was understood, began admitting residents on an emergency basis only. Recently our homes have started to review and admit new residents as they had previously.

New residents are required to be in quarantine for their first 14 days at the home in a designated isolation area of rooms. When the new residents are determined to be safe, they are transferred to a non-isolation area of the facility.

We are also revising our restricted visitor policy to include both window and outdoor visits. The visits require physical distancing, screening for symptoms, and wearing personal protective equipment.

If circumstances change, we may need to turn back the dial and return to more visitor restrictions. Learn more about how we are handling COVID-19 in the homes on our website.

## Cemeteries

Minnesota State Veterans Cemeteries remain open for visitors seven days a week from sunrise to sunset. Visitors should practice physical distancing. As of July 1, we have increased the number of committal services attendees to 50. Because of the smaller size of our committal area, we limit group size to ensure social distancing. We continue to

strongly encourage all service attendees to wear a mask per CDC and MDH guidelines. More details are on our website.

## Poll volunteers needed

It takes nearly 30,000 poll workers to run Minnesota's polling places each election, but this year over half of existing poll workers may choose not to work at the polls on Election Day because they are members of the high-risk categories most susceptible to COVID-19.

The Office of the Secretary of State is asking state agency employees to consider volunteering to work the polls during the primary and general elections. Contact your county's elections office if you are interested in supporting the primary election on Aug. 11 or the general election on Nov. 3.

Under Minnesota Statutes section 204B.195, employees may receive time off without reduction in pay to train and serve as election judges. The online training takes about two hours. Please give your supervisor as much notice as possible of your request for election judge leave.

*Larry Herke of Sauk Rapids is the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. He is a member of Hastings Post 47.*

# The SAL Update:

## Deer hunt canceled; Camporee is on

Greetings American Legion Family from your Sons of The American Legion.

With June behind us and July halfway through, I would like to say *Thank You* to all my officers for staying on for another year. I would also like to congratulate a few new members to the team this year, Casey Lenort, Stu Sonee, Steve Sullivan and Cal Van Horn.

Some points of interest for the upcoming Fall season. It is with a very heavy and sad heart that I have to announce that we will not be having the John Zgoda Memorial Disabled Veterans

## Detachment commander

Dave Vulcan



Deer Hunt this year. We look forward to having it next year.

On the other hand, I am still looking forward to being able to see all of you at the 51st Annual Camporee. Please find information in this month's Legionnaire on this event. Please check Facebook or our text service to stay current with this event.

Until next time, stay safe and

healthy. We will get through this together.

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

# Let's get all those reports turned in

## Squadron Officer Reports

Squadron Officer Reporting forms are now due. These were sent out with the Squadron membership packets. These should be completed by each squadron, and sent into Department each year, even if there is no change in officers, dues, or other information.

## Consolidated Squadron Reports

With all that is going on as we fight to get back in our home Post and get back to all the work that we do, we need to finish our business from last year for our organization.

We just do not have many of our Consolidated Squadron Reports turned in for the year. We need everyone's help to pass on the word to all Detachments, Districts, Areas and Squadrons to help us get these reports submitted in the next couple of weeks.

As this goes out, we have ap-

## National commander

Clint Bolt



proximately three weeks to get them turned in to our National organization. Many of our Squadrons are now on MySAL.org, and some have submitted through the page. Others are still working on getting familiar using the site. Many still want to mail in the paper copy. If you feel better, do both! We much rather have two copies than have none.

The numbers we get from the report are not just about judging and getting awards, but are used by The American Legion to go before Congress and share the work we do for our Veterans, community and to support our flag.

There are over 6,000 Squadrons in our organization, and last year we had just approximately 1,200 Squadrons turn in

the annual report. Remember that every Squadron has done something this year. To help, we have listed line by line things you can claim on the report and if you need help, the Americanism Commission is happy to assist anyone we can. Please take the time and fill out your report.

To the leadership of our Detachments, please help spread the word and help Squadrons in your state get these reports filled out and turned in.

Thank you for your help.

*Clint Bolt of Virginia is the National commander of the Sons of The American Legion.*

# Have you heard of the Sons of TAL?

Although we've been around for a while (since 1932), you may not have heard of the Sons of The American Legion.

It's more likely that you've seen us out working in the community. Each year, the members of Sons of The American Legion sponsor the Veterans Graves Decoration Project that decorates veterans' graves with American Flags on Memorial Day weekend.

Or perhaps you've seen our color guard leading the annual Independence Day or Memorial Day Parades. Your parents may have attended one of our Veterans Day events in November.

We're involved in a lot of

different activities and we've got some very dedicated members who work to make these programs a reality. Every day and in so many ways, we work to make a difference in our community, state and nation.

Ours is a fraternity of service, dedicated to helping others, providing educational, recreational, and leadership opportunities to people from all walks of life. Preserving American traditions and values, improving the quality of life for our nation's children, caring for veterans and their families, and teaching the fundamentals of good citizenship are what this organization is all about.

Not just anyone can join the

Sons — you've got to be someone special. Our members are male descendants (sons, grandsons, great grandsons, including adopted or steps) of America's veterans from World War I to today's current war in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Our members are the most important part of this great organization. Without them, we could not accomplish anything. With them, we can do anything. We hope that you will join us!

Yours for God and Country,

**John Dietz**  
Past National Commander  
Sons of The American Legion

## BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



**Longtime Albert Lea Post 56 baseball coach Ed Stalker was inducted into the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame on July 17 during a meal and ceremony at Post 56's banquet hall. Stalker died at 88 in Vadnais Heights in 2018. From left are Post 56 Vice Commander Ole Olson, Ed Stalker's son Mark, widow Donna Stalker and Minnesota Legion Baseball Director Randy Schaub.**

## BERLIN CRISIS

# Cold War soldier

Whether it was family, country or the community, Fick kept on serving

By Tim Engstrom

LAKE CITY — Born to Lawrence and Harriet Fick, Emery Fick grew up on the farm where he now lives along Wabasha County Road 2. There was a one-room schoolhouse across the road. After eighth grade, he didn't continue to high school and instead helped on the farm.

By the time he was eligible to be drafted, he was working on another farm. The man from the fuel company wanted Fick to drive a truck but needed to know his draft status.

Fick went to the Reserve Center and signed up. Less than a week later, he was on a bus to the Twin Cities, then on a train to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. It was 1957.

He spent eight weeks at basic training, then on to Delaware, for six more months. His brother, Gerald, had helped at the farm, and once Emery returned, Gerald left for basic.

They were in the same unit, the 544th

Ordnance Company out of Wabasha, and Emery's job was engine repair. He became the sergeant in charge of the motor pool.

In 1961, they were activated. It was a tense moment in the Cold War — the Berlin Crisis.

But for any young readers, here's the situation: After World War II, occupying forces had divided the city of Berlin and the country of Germany. The USSR occupied what became East Germany and eastern half of Berlin. Allied forces of the United States, United Kingdom and France occupied what became West Germany and the western side of Berlin.

The Soviets had wielded influence across Eastern European countries, including East Germany, and by the time of the Warsaw Pact of 1955, they had become puppet states. Hungary, for example, in 1956 had tried to revolt against Soviet rule. The revolution was crushed.

This left West Berlin a free city



**Emery Fick was a Reservist during the Berlin Crisis of 1961. Like Army Reserve soldiers across the United States, he and the 544th Ordnance Company — mainly boys from the Wabasha area — went to a military installation to prepare for war. The 544th went to Fort Polk, Louisiana.**

inside a communist country during the Cold War — an age of nuclear diplomacy and proxy wars pitting communism against democracy.

In November 1958, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev demanded the Western allies withdraw from Berlin in six months. The allies resolved to remain. After negotiations, Khrushchev dropped his ultimatum in 1959. He visited America and even visited a farm in Iowa and met with President Dwight Eisenhower at Camp David. Relations were on the mend.

But in June 1961, Khrushchev re-issued the same ultimatum, further asking the allies to sign a peace treaty with East Germany and to end access to West Berlin by Dec. 31.

President John F. Kennedy the next month announced plans to expand the military, triple the draft and call up the Reserves. But it remained just plans for now.

On Aug. 13, East Germany closed its borders with West Berlin. Barbed wire, fences and troops secured the border areas while East German troops built the Berlin Wall. In response, Kennedy called up 148,000 members of the Reserves and National Guard to active duty.

Well, that meant the Fick boys.

"Both boys had to go," Emery said.

Both were in the 544th. The unit went to Fort Polk, Louisiana, and spent 10 months there. Their folks and two

sisters were nervous. Again, Emery was in charge of the motor pool.

"East Germany knew America was getting ready," he said.

He has fond memories of the 544th's time in Louisiana. He shared one story. The platoon lieutenant wanted to take a ride in a tank. His motor pool included tanks, so he took the guy out for a spin. He even let him drive one.

The lieutenant got going and then braked too hard, which caused the back end to pop up while the front end was on the forward part of the tracks.

"I told him, 'Next time, don't stop so fast,'" he said.

By October, other tanks were making news. Soviet and American tanks in Berlin were facing each other fully loaded at Checkpoint Charlie. Kennedy and his advisers were OK with the construction of the wall if the Soviet tanks backed off first. They did, one by one. Once a Soviet tank moved back, an American one moved back, until they were all cleared.

A month after returning, Emery married Vicky. Their folks then moved into town and Emery and Vicky took over the farm. Gerald took over a farm across the road.

Emery had dairy and beef cattle, along with a rotation of crops, and eventually a trucking business.

As for the Reserves, he went to four more months of meetings after

returning from Fort Polk, then was discharged.

In the 1970s, he started going to American Legion meetings at Lake City Post 110. Only three people came to the meeting, and there was no commander. Two months later, they named him the commander. He had experience with leadership from the Wabasha County Cattlemen.

Emery Fick ended up being the commander of Lake City Post 110 for 18 years. He also is a past Wabasha County commander and Area 1 vice commander for District 1.

The first thing he did was to get more members to come to the Post meetings.

Membership grew. He worked to have a strong relationship with the Lake City VFW commander, and they began to do funerals together, which they still do today.

A Lake City Legion/VFW crew also travels to the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery in Preston to decorate graves and to provide honors.

"It didn't used to be that way," Fick said, "but we improved relations when we started doing funerals. Now we do everything together. That was one of my accomplishments."

Another was the Legion and Auxiliary rents 700 flags and posts them along the Lake City River Walk during Water Ski Days. Who leads the Auxiliary? Vicky has for 20 years.



**Emery and Vicky Fick stand by a yard decoration with their names on it at their farm south of Lake City.**

## FULL-BIRD AWESOME!



**Photo and text by Camp Ripley on Facebook: On June 22, Make-A-Wish Foundation and Camp Ripley collaborated to bring a 7-year-old boy's wish of being "a soldier for a day" come true. Dexter Preston, along with his family, visited Camp Ripley to experience a soldier's role in the National Guard. Prior to coming, Dexter was given a uniform with his last name, dog tags and the rank of a colonel.**

**His day consisted of looking at the environmental classroom, going for a ride in Brig. Gen. Lowell Kruse's jeep, looking inside an Abrams tank and a Bradley fighting vehicle, riding in a fire truck and spraying water, flying a simulated chopper and getting "pinned" with wings, with a final stop at Vahalla for lunch with Kruse and Lt. Col. Patrick Cornwell. It was nothing short of a great day for Dexter, his family, and all those involved.**

## 2020 scholarship winners named

The American Legion Department of Minnesota Americanism Committee has announced winners of 2020 scholarships.

### Memorial Scholarship

- Morgan Frederick, Plymouth, \$500, headed to the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

- Taylor Barber, Spicer, \$500, headed to Saint Benedict College

- Lindsey Espeseth, Erskine, \$500, headed to University of Minnesota, Crookston

- Kennedy Truscinski, Greenbush, \$500, headed to University of Minnesota, Rochester

- Dena Fischer, Ottertail, \$500, headed to Minnesota State University, Moorhead

- Vanessa Peer, Cannon Falls, \$500, headed to University of St. Thomas

### Foundation Scholarship

- Anna Roiger, Mound, \$500,



- headed to the University of St. Thomas

- Greg Holst, Eyota, \$500, headed to Minnesota State University, Mankato

- Marcus Uthke, Eyota, \$500, headed to University of St. Thomas

### Nurse's Training Scholarship

- Maggie Marx, South Haven, \$1,000, headed to Southwest Minnesota State University

- Megan Crist, Cambridge, \$1,000, headed to Concordia College, Moorhead

- Grace Sinclair, Blaine, \$1,000, headed to College of Saint Benedict.

# Listening Post

## MAKE A DENT



TOP: Jenny Caughey, Mary Ann Strauch and Char Scott load masks for delivery to the Fargo VA Medical Center. ABOVE: Dent Post 148 Commander Jim Scott and his wife, Char, delivers 1,000 masks to Steven Sanders at the Fargo VA Medical Center.

The Minnesota American Legion and Minnesota Quilts of Valor have forged a partnership to make and transport cloth masks for use in veterans' care facilities in the region. (See stories in June and July issues.) The Minnesota American Legion Foundation was responsible for a grant to Quilts of Valor for the purchase of a cutting machine, too. Local Posts have helped offset costs, as well.

## IN CASE YOU NEED SOME ...



Eagan Post 594 member Colleen Vaubel is with Sergeant-at-Arms Jerry Skala. The Post hosted an Independence Day Blood Drive at the Eagan Community Center.



From left are Eagan Post 594 member John Rayman, an official with the American Red Cross and Post 594 member Gary McDevitt.

## RETIRE THE COLORS



Honor Guard from North St. Paul Post 39.



Honor Guard from North St. Paul Post 39 Commander Tom Burns and White Bear Lake Post 168 Adjutant Mike Martens with the flag to be retired.



From left are Forest Lake Post 225's Tom Vodacek, Martens and Burns.

## FAIRMONT'S FAIR AMOUNT



Minnesota American Legion 2nd District Commander Brad Pagel accepts a donation of \$1,500 for Eagle's Healing Nest Redwood Falls from Fairmont Post 36 Commander Steve Fosness. Eagle's Healing Nest is the 2nd District Legion Family's project for this year. It is a nonprofit organization committed to meeting the needs of our veterans, service members and their families who suffer from the invisible wounds of war.

Innovation Comes Standard  
Driven to be Different  
WE SUPPORT OUR VETERANS  
CUMMINGS MOBILITY  
VISIT OUR LOCATIONS  
Albertville: 763-497-0103  
Burnsville: 952-435-8889  
Roseville: 651-633-7887  
Des Moines: 515-207-3555  
BraunAbility  
Life is a Moving Experience

Veterans Linkage Line™  
minnesotaveteran.org | 1-888-LinkVet (546-5838)  
Help for veterans and families

# Listening Post

## MEMORIAL DAY



Woodbury Post 501 Commander Tom Grezek, Vice Commander Bob Dolan and Dale Johnson placed flags at three cemeteries: Woodbury United Methodist, St. John Lutheran and Salem Lutheran cemeteries to honor fallen warriors.

## TRANSPORTATION NETWORKING



Bill Barbknecht of Underwood Post 489 brought masks made by the Quilts of Valor groups working in Dent to Sons of The American Legion member Ervin Ruiz of St. Paul Squadron 577 in Avon on July 12. He delivered many of them to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, the Minneapolis Veterans Home and the Hastings Veterans Home.



Barbknecht brought the rest of the masks to his fiancée, Willmar Auxiliary Unit 167 member Donna Arends, left, who took them to the Willmar Post on July 15, then handed them off to New London Unit 537's Mary Kuperus, in blue in both photos, who brought them to 2nd District Auxiliary President Robin Olson, right, in Redwood Falls, who on July 18 brought them to Diane Strassburg, not pictured. She is the Auxiliary's volunteer representative at the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center. Strassburg and her husband, Dennis, together of Adrian Unit and Post 32, then brought them to that hospital in South Dakota. (Phew!)

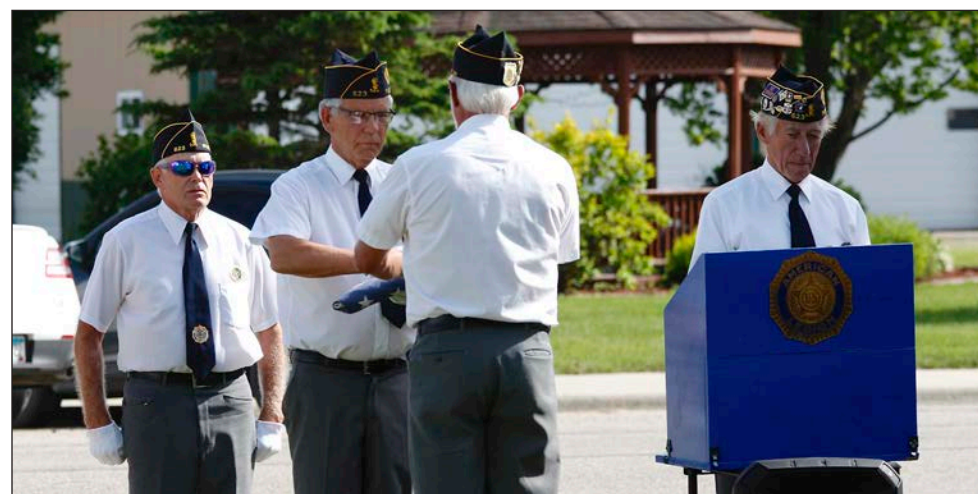


## HAPPY 50TH!



American Legion Fairmont Post 36 honored three 50-year members. From left are Sergeant-at-Arms Pam Krill, 50-year member Darrell Wannarka, 50-year member Gary Moore, 50-year member Jim Miller and Commander Steve Fosness.

## FLAG DAY HONORS



On Flag Day, June 14, Plummer Post 623 held a flag-disposal ceremony next to the Post home. A video of the event is available on YouTube. <https://youtu.be/AIP78DYbh6Q>.

Past Commander Clarence Gagner served as emcee and began the program by welcoming everyone. He called upon post chaplain Les Hofstad to give the invocation after which the national anthem was played.

Gagner recognized several post members for their years of service in the Legion: Melvin Hesse for 65 years, Roger Skjerven for 49 years, Billy Peterson for 43 years, Marvin Engesether for 44 years.

All together that's just over 200 years, 201 to be exact.

Gagner also thanked the Legion Auxiliary for their support. RLCC graduating senior Derek Peterson was recognized as the recipient of a \$350 scholarship. Chris Longtin was recognized as the recipient of the Citizenship Award and a \$100 scholarship. Auxiliary president Kristi Hesse recognized Jayden Iverson as the recipient

of a \$350 Auxiliary scholarship and Calyssa Eskeli as the recipient of the Auxiliary Citizenship Award. Jayden was the only one in attendance and received a round of applause.

The flag ceremony began with the purpose of showing the American flag the respect and honor it deserves. In a moving ceremony, marked with military precision, salutes, respect, and somberness, the Legion Post did just that. Gagner called upon Sergeant-at-arms Chuck Simpson to advance the flag for inspection by the inspection team of Barry Rewertz and Commander Roy Holmes. They did a very somber presentation and inspection of the folded flag. They were asked by Gagner what they found.

Holmes replied that they had found the flag worn and faded and deserving honorable retirement. Gagner replied, "Let

these faded flags of our country be retired and destroyed with respect and honor." After a prayer from Chaplain Hofstad, the inspection team carried the folded flag to the two Honor Guard members at the burn barrel. The flag was reverently handed to Josh Bakke, who together with his father, Jerome Bakke, unfolded the flag. Once unfolded and stretched horizontal to the ground, the flag was advanced and lowered over the burn barrel. The wind made it difficult to hold the flag steady and to lower it into the fire, but they accomplished their task. As the flag burned, "Taps" was played with all Legionnaires standing at attention. At the conclusion, Legionnaires were ordered to parade rest.

Gagner thanked everyone for being there and invited all to have lunch which the Auxiliary had prepared.



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

Editor's note: Most the reports were printed in the July issue of The Minnesota Legionnaire. Here are the rest.

## National Security

Our year began with our annual meetings at Camp Ripley with all of the 10 District commanders and their committee chairmen. Our Department committee reviewed the applications for Enlisted Person of the Year and made their selections. All branches of the Guard and Reserve in Minnesota were represented.

Our meeting was spent reviewing the responsibilities of the District chairmen followed by a tour of Camp Ripley and a visit to the State Cemetery and the museum on the base. Sunday was spent planning this year's activities for each District followed by manning The American Legion booth at Camp Ripley's Base Family Open House. The base allowed us to use one of their training rooms for our meeting. The rooms are state-of-the-art. This gave us a great start to our year.

Each year I ask our District chairmen to report on their activities. Many of them did, and I am pleased to report that

they have been active in many Districts. We have received several nominations for Enlisted Person of the Year but are in need of more. Please help out your District chairmen in this, and all of their other visits to your Guard and Reserve units. As with members, it is not one member's job. Each District has at least three armories located in their District. Your visits and support are always needed.

Our ROTC scholarship program was again in place. Scholarships were awarded. Because of the COVID outbreak, some of the presentations were not made as a result of cancelled events. The COVID outbreak created a new response to action. It became a National Security and Foreign Relations response event.

I am please to report that once again the Minnesota American Legion Family sprang into action. Many of our American Legion Family members supplied masks to protect our veterans in their nursing homes, VA hospitals and Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) around the state. Members reported to

armories and assembled masks for our Guardsmen. Our local American Legion Family donated and raised funds to provide hand sanitizer to our VA hospital and CBOCs. Many of these activities are still going on. We can be proud of our response to this need.

As of this writing, we are facing another need for support. Minnesota has activated our National Guard in response to a recent outbreak of events in our state. They need our continued support both during this time and after they return home. National Security and Foreign Relations has become a way of life now more than ever.

I ask for your continued support of your committee and pray for an end to come to these current activities so we can begin a new normal way of life now and into the future.

**Jim Kellogg**  
Chairman

## Public Relations

The Public Relations

Committee worked this year on training and started the review of media, advertising and targeting markets across Minnesota. In February we rolled out a Public Relations Training in 2nd District Commander Brad Pagel's District, which had a nice attendance and had a very positive response. The formation of some future media and Veterans Service introductions were also made at the event held in Slayton in February.

With Covid-19 causing a shutdown of meetings, the committee spent time reviewing potential online training and continued contacting media and community contacts for more public relations connections to be made in 2021. The committee also worked during the COVID-19 threat by sending photos and information, contacts and other information to our Legionnaire newspaper.

The Public Relations committee members also participated in several TV broadcasts and interviews.

With the addition of our new newspaper editor, new adjutant, and the contracting of Snow Globe PR, the Public Relations

Committee will be meeting with leadership to discuss the needs of the Legion and where the committee can most benefit our American Legion.

**Tim Burley**  
Chairman

## Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

The Minnesota American Legion Department Rehabilitation Committee is a five-member committee composed of organizational members with a background, knowledge or professional experience related to the delivery of VA benefits, programs and services.

Committee members are appointed by the Department commander to a five-year term or to the remaining portion of the term of a resigned member. Past and present Rehabilitation members have been former directors or administrators of VA medical centers, state Veterans Homes, county veterans service officers, Vet Center team leaders, American Legion senior organizational leadership and Department service officer all with a working knowledge of the VA, MDVA, legislative process and The American Legion.

This past year, our committee consisted of Wilson Spence, Bill Brockberg, Dan Tengwell, Gary Muckholm and Lynn Lyons. We work very closely with Department Service Officer Jeremy Wolfsteller and Department Administrative Assistant Heather Larson.

District Rehabilitation chairmen and the Post service officers are also integral members of our committee. Together we make up Minnesota Rehabilitation. Each segment of the Minnesota Rehabilitation has an important roll in providing services to each Minnesota veteran and protecting the well-earned benefits provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Rehabilitation is one of the Four Pillars on which the American Legion was founded and holds the roof above the head of

all Legionnaires. Because of the roll we play in Minnesota, it is very important to keep the Minnesota Rehabilitation Committee very strong and functioning.

This year we meet with VA Medical Centers in St. Cloud, Minneapolis and Fargo and Minnesota Veterans Homes in Luverne, Hastings, Minneapolis, Fergus Falls. We advocated to the United States Congress and to the Minnesota Legislature for the facilities contacted, and we provided the Legion Family with information gleaned from our facility visits (see Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Reports on the Department of Minnesota website).

This year we selected Dr. Megan Press as the American Legion Department of Minnesota Physician of the Year. Dr. Press was also selected by National American Legion Physician of the Year.

The Rehabilitation Committee conducted an appreciation reception for the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Claims office staff in appreciation for all they do for American Legion veteran claims. Three members of the Rehabilitation Committee attended the American Legion Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., to discuss veteran issues with our Minnesota legislators. Upon our return home to Minnesota, Gov. Tim Walz issued stay-at-home orders.

Just like you, the Rehabilitation Committee had to adapt. Our site visit scheduled for April had to be canceled. We conducted a telephone conference with VISN 23 Director and Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Commissioner for the Minnesota Veterans Homes Doug Hughes in our working through this social distancing.

The committee wants each of you to stay safe and healthy in is this unprecedented pandemic. We will make it through this and get our business accomplished.

The Minnesota Rehabilitation Committee members take pride in the American Legion Rehabilitation and are honored to serve the veterans of Minnesota.

**Wilson W. Spence III**  
Chairman

## Statement: Veterans organizations disheartened with Minnesota Senate

The Minnesota Commanders' Task Force comprises the Minnesota departments of nine veterans organizations:

- The American Legion
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Disabled American Veterans
- American Veterans
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Jewish War Veterans
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Marine Corps League

For short, it is called the CTF. Commanders, legislative officers and staff from each push for legislation that would benefit veterans in Minnesota. They have been a primary mover in the efforts to expand veterans courts in the state. (The American Legion passed a resolution in favor of them in 2016.)

Four days after the Minnesota Senate rejected the Veterans Restorative Justice Act on July 20, the CTF issued the following statement to the media statewide. It can be attributed to Todd Kemery,

chairman of the CTF and vice president of Minnesota Paralyzed Veterans of America.

It states:

"On behalf of the nine congressionally chartered veteran service organizations in Minnesota, we are disappointed with the inaction of the Minnesota Senate to pass the Veterans Restorative Justice Act and assert that Greater Minnesota's rural communities will continue to bear a disproportionate societal and financial burden.

Throughout our state, 29 of Minnesota's 87 county court systems have a diversion program called veterans treatment court to take into consideration issues specific to veterans. While not exempted from punishment from the law, many of the veterans processed through these specially-convened courts have service-related issues such as chemical exposure, physical injury, post-traumatic stress disorder and military sexual trauma considered as they



navigate their path to recovery and restitution through the legal system.

In the view of the Minnesota-based branches of The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, Jewish War Veterans, Marine Corps League, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Paralyzed Veterans of America and Vietnam Veterans of America, we are unified in believing that a veteran who

once met the high ethical, legal and moral standards to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces and have strayed into illegal actions can be once again restored to a functional and productive citizen. We call this 'Veterans Restorative Justice.'

The proposed Veterans Restorative Justice Act was designed to create a legal policy framework for all Minnesota counties. With the consultation of judges, prosecutors and public defenders, this idea was officially presented in the Minnesota State Legislature as a bill (House File 998/Senate File 1153) with favorable support from the broader Minnesota legal community. When the bill is passed, counties then have the option to choose whether to implement veteran's treatment courts.

Of importance to all Minnesotans, this policy required no financial investment, just a commitment to uniformly change court business practices to consider the unique experience of veterans.

When the future cost of potential incarceration, veteran suicides, homelessness, divorces and family disruption is considered, the nonpartisan state office Minnesota Management and Budget has estimated savings of \$1.3 million in the first two years and \$2.3 million in the second two years.

The veteran community acknowledges, appreciates and supports that the year 2020 dictate that our state elected officials must prioritize legislative action toward COVID-19 and social justice; however, we dispute that the Veterans Restorative Justice Act was lost as an actionable, taxpayer-savings bill that would assist those that have served our nation.

Fellow Minnesotans, we presume that there will be another special session to break through the log jam our legislators face. I urge you to contact your elected official to support your hometown veterans and demand the Veterans Restorative Justice Act is instated."

ST. PAUL — After nine years as the executive secretary of the American Legion Auxiliary, Sandie Deutsch is heading off into the sunset of retirement.

She and Gerald “Shorty” Deutsch already are living out of their motorhome in Hastings. Their house in Montgomery is on the market.

The staff of the Legion Family held a retirement party on the fifth floor of the Veterans Service Building on July 14. Her final day was July 17.

“It’s time. I’m healthy and my husband and I want to enjoy our life,” she said. “If I were younger, I would keep going forever.”

Sandie began working at the Auxiliary in October 2011. She is proud of the changes during that time:

- The Auxiliary governance and management seeing eye-to-eye and trusting each other.
- The Legion and Auxiliary management working together more often than before.
- The Auxiliary getting on board with 21st century technology, doing more business over the Internet.
- The Auxiliary staff being cross-trained on many of each other’s duties.

She said much of the credit for those improvements goes to other people, such as former Legion Adjutant Randy Tesdahl and the nine past Auxiliary presidents.

She said those presidents “are like sisters to me.”

So what’s next? “I’m just going lie on the couch and do nothing for the next two weeks,” she said.

Sandie is 65, and Shorty is 68. Sandie grew up in Montgomery and stayed. Shortie grew up over in New Prague.

Shorty did spend a little time in California, for training at Fort Ord in the Army Reserves back in the Vietnam era, then returned to Minnesota. After years of living in Montgomery, they look forward to living out of their motorhome and travelling. They plan to winter in Yuma, Arizona.

The couple has three grown children: Nikki, Melissa and Brad. All are married, each with one boy and one girl. Nikki and her family live in Montgomery, Melissa and her family in Streetman, Texas, and Brad and his family in Arlington, Texas.

You might hear Sandie visiting babies in Texas from time to time. Their journeys will bring them back to Minnesota.

Sandie plans to stop at the Fall Conference at Breezy Point Resort.

“I was going to say goodbye at the Department Convention, but now it will have to be the Fall Conference,” she said. “These people, they become your family.”

Sandie got a job in high school working for a local bank and ended up doing it for 13 years. By the time she was done, she learned all the departments and had been everything from a teller to a loan processor.

She went to work for Rupp Industries and commuted 38 miles — 76 round-trip — daily for 27 years until the company was sold. Her job title was administrative manager.

At that point, she was going to retire. Done.

Then her financial adviser persuaded her to work for him, and she did for two months. Then she saw an ad in The Minnesota Legionnaire. Shorty, by this time, was the manager of Montgomery Post 79’s bar and restaurant.

“The ad said it needed an ‘executive secretary,’” Sandie said. “I thought, ‘Well, hell, I can do that,’ but I had no clue. You are in charge of a whole corporation, and there was no one prior to show me what to do. I had to gain the trust of members.”

Everything turned out fine and her commute now was 55 miles — 110 round-trip.

But the work was rewarding, and the family atmosphere enjoyable. “There was never a dull moment. Ever.”

That includes Christmas 2011, when Shorty had a heart attack. He was back to work three days later. He retired at the end of 2019.

“The American Legion has been our life,” she said.

Sandie will preside over the wedding of Donna Arends and Bill Barbknecht at their residence in Battle Lake on Aug. 8. Barbknecht is the Department of Minnesota’s National Executive Committee man, and Arends chairs the Junior Activities Committee. Members of the American Legion Family from all across Minnesota will attend, especially since conventions, rallies and other get-togethers have been called off since March.

Sandie is 40 percent of the way through Leo Tolstoy’s “War and Peace.” It’s the second-to-last thing on her bucket list. The last is parasailing.



**Sandie Deutsch**

## A less-scary look at the COVID-19 numbers ...

The American Legion Department of Minnesota is not being political by publishing these numbers. There are many numbers shared by the news media that tend to look at the worst, instead of straight comparisons allowing for consumers to decide. We felt it would be useful for members, regardless of how they stand on an issue that, because it is a medical matter, should not have become political, too.

Minnesota population	5,640,000	
Total tests	905,315	16.05% of the state population
Positive cases	48,721	0.86% of the state population
Recovered cases	42,524	0.75% of the state population
Total Deaths	1,561	0.0277% of the state population
Long-term care or assisted living deaths	1,198	77% of total deaths 0.0212% of state population
General population deaths	363	23% of total deaths 0.0064% of state population
Total requiring hospitalization	4,818	9.89% of cases 0.0854% of state population
Documented active cases	4,636	(Positive cases minus recovered cases minus total deaths)
Percentage of state population documented active:		0.082%

## Listening Post

### PLENTY OF SPACE



Buffalo Post 270 says thanks to all the show car participants for joining the Post at its second car show of the season on Tuesday, July 21. It had 88 cars and plenty of space for social distancing. Plans are already being made to make the food and beverage service run faster next time. “We are new to large car show events,” it reported. The next car show at Post 270 is from 4:30 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 18. There will be an outdoor grill for burgers and brats. Future car shows are 4:30 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 15 and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 3, with live music from the Shane Martin Band.

## Byron Post’s support for students on full display

*Editor’s note: This story was written by the staff at the National HQ of The American Legion. It appeared on the National website, too.*

BYRON — For the seniors at Byron High School in Byron, the 2019-2020 school year won’t end as they’d envisioned. In April the order came down that all of the state’s public schools would be closed for the rest of the academic year.

Normal senior-year activities and events were gone by the wayside, replaced by “virtual” possibilities.

But because of members of Byron American Legion Post 119, the graduating seniors have been honored publicly, for all of the community to see. More than 150 flags decorate the grass in front of the post, along with “GO BEARS” spelled out in large painted letters.

The display honors the 130 graduating seniors and first suggested by Post 119 Finance Officer Gordon Bishop after seeing a similar display on another high school’s baseball field as a way to recognize the school’s students.

“I said to myself, ‘We’ve got to do something like that over here,’” said Bishop, who then got the support of the Post’s executive committee. Bishop and other members of Post 119 then spent 100-150 man hours experimenting with different sizes and heights of flags and different ways of displaying the flags and the letters.

The Post ended up using 12-inch x 8-inch flags on two-and-a-half-foot poles. The letters were painted on 4-foot x 8-foot pieces of plywood, using the school colors of black and gold; Post 119 got assistance from the school’s art teachers in coming up with the style of letters.

Each flagpole has a waterproof label with a student’s name and another with a message that says “Go Bears.”

Bishop also ordered a large decal of a bear’s head in the image of the school’s



Flags, a mascot and a “Go Bears” message honors 130 graduating seniors.

mascot, as well as a banner with the message “CONGRATULATIONS & BEST WISHES 2020 BYRON SENIOR CLASS.” Each student will get to keep their flag following the virtual graduation ceremony.

“They’re losing their senior prom, and graduation ... now it’s basically a virtual one,” Bishop said. “We wanted to cheer (the seniors) up somehow. That was the whole basis for this: to try to get the students and the school and the parents something to cheer them up a little bit.”

Bishop received help with the project from Post 119 Commander Carl DeWaard and Legionnaires Chuck Krueger, Troy Landsverk and Terry Severson. DeWaard said the display is another way the post supports local youth. “We try to sponsor them in any way, shape or form that we can because they are our future,” he said. “We were just looking for some way ... to help honor (the seniors) and help rally the community for the kids.”

Bishop said the goal is to make the display a yearly happening, replacing the flags

with names of that year’s seniors on them.

Bishop said this year’s effort has resulted in thanks and praise on social media, and that there are cars parked at the display regularly, with students and parents looking at it, taking selfies and finding their name on a flag.

“We have supported the school in a number of other ways,” Bishop said. “

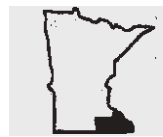
Byron Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Joey Page thanked Post 119 publicly on Twitter, sharing photos of the display, and later said the post’s effort is an example of the character of its members.

“This national emergency has caused us, and especially our seniors, to miss out on being here with their friends,” Page said. “They have missed out on competing and cheering at academic and athletic events, school plays, band concerts, and so much more of what they have worked hard and waited for over the school year. To have the Byron American Legion Post 119 acknowledge our students is very special and exemplifies their creed of honor and service.”



**4 PILLARS  
1 FAMILY**

# District commanders



## 1st District

**Dale Wellik**



Greetings from the 1st District American Legion Family. Thank you for your service and support.

We are now beginning the 2020-2021 American Legion year.

Membership continues on; all packets are distributed to the districts and Posts. We need a strong start. Let's get our dues paid. Some things are on the calendar and not cancelled. We need to move forward in a cautious and positive direction and maybe a little creative in the things we plan and do.

Zoom meetings and conference calls are working to get

the information out to Districts and Posts. Get involved and support your Post now that they are opening in maybe a smaller and cautious way. Call to find out what you can do to help. If everyone did even one small thing, your Post can again be a thriving Post.

Pray for our deployed, defending our freedom and their families that are dealing with all that is needed on the home front. God bless each and every one of you. Stay safe and strong.

*For God and Country.*



## 2nd District

**Brad Pagel**



Well, it's that time of year again, as the new membership cycles have started. Now is the time to pay your dues so you don't have to worry about them for another year. Moving on to the better things of the Family, as we start getting to normal again, let's keep up what we have been doing and do it better.

I want to thank everyone who came out for the 2nd District Family project presentation on July 18 at the Eagle's Healing Nest in Redwood Falls. (See story on Page 7.) That meant a lot to all of us. The 2nd District rocks as total donations for the year totaled \$7,519. Thank you all who contributed to the project.

This year's District Family project will remain Eagle's Healing Nest Redwood Falls.

Mentorship is key to the younger members who desire to lead and move up. For with-

out mentorship in a positive way, is there any reason for the young leaders to move up and better the organization? The younger members are looking for positive mentorship to be better leaders, if all they hear are the negatives on how it will never work, or it's always been done this way, what reason do they have to want to advance then?

Potential new young members want to share their new ideas. They have to be given a try and not just one time. I have a saying that goes: "Try things at least three times to see if it works or make adjustments to make it better."

Let's start acting like a Family and all work together for the future of the organization.



## 3rd District

**Linda Dvorak**



Hello from the Thundering Third!

I feel like I was put on rewind! Another year is here and so am I, as the District commander. The Thundering 3rd District has stayed with the same officers except for the Membership Director, which is now John Flynn, Steve NaSalle from Chaska was appointed to take on the role of vice commander in place of John. I couldn't have asked for a better team last year; this upcoming year will be just as great!

As we enter the new year, it will be a year of change; the way we conduct meetings, the way we hold rallies, etc. It is important now more than ever to do Buddy Checks with the

Post members. Several of our older members look forward to our get-togethers and a virtual meeting isn't the same for them.

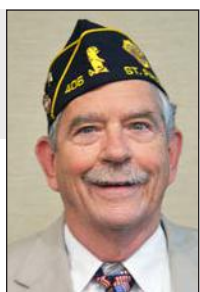
The District has started the year off contacting all 325-plus members of MN1982 in our area and asking them to transfer to a local post in the District. Good results so far. We are getting quite a few to transfer, even if they have already paid their dues. Several of them didn't even realize they were in a Post at-large and not the local Post.

Here's to another great Legion year!



## 4th District

**Joe Jansen**



Dear 4th District American Legion family members, July was a slow month for the 4th District except for Zoom meetings. We did have a Post turn in its charter and another is close

to doing the same thing. I admit to mixed feelings

when a Post turns in its charter; on the one hand, it's sad that no one was recruited to carry on the good works of our organization; on the other hand, the members who are still able to join another Post will help carry on the goals of The American Legion.

Aug. 12 we are having a special meeting at 7 p.m. at North

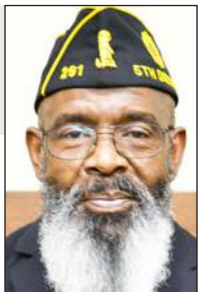
St. Paul Post 39 to amend the bylaws to allow us to have joint meetings in January with 5th District, but not just on the first Saturday of January.

All members of the 4th District Family are invited to this meeting. This meeting will also be on Zoom so if you do not want to attend in person your voice can still be heard.



## 5th District

**Andrew Rose Sr.**



Greetings Fighting 5th District. Pray that all are staying well during this coronavirus pandemic. Please wear your masks, practice safe distancing and frequently wash your hands.

This is my last column as commander of the Fighting 5th District. I would like to thank those who stood with me through the year, unprecedented as it were. Also, my best wishes go out to incoming Commander Wade Larson, all the best. And I'm sure with his leadership our membership numbers will increase.

We are still seeking vice commanders for the 5th District, those interested call Jim

Munson at 952-884-7032.

I would like to thank my Commander's Project, Every Third Saturday and Tom McKenna. I pray that we don't lose the initiative and support for this worthy cause. Refer veterans and veterans families in need to Tom, 952-356-5116. It is much appreciated Tom.

Please don't forget our friends in care facilities, hospitals or convalescing at home.

And never forget our men and women in harm's way that allow us to go on with life as we do.

Thanks to all of you.



## 6th District

**Paul Edwards**



Greetings to the Minnesota Legion Family,

With the publication of the August 2020 newsletter, we are at the beginning of the new Legion activity and membership year, so welcome to another year of American Legion adventures. I know from the Post Officer Reports that we have some new leadership in a few of our posts. Welcome aboard and please know that every member of the District leadership team is ready and willing to work with you to help you and your Post be successful.

We still need Legionnaires to step into leadership in the Legion. I continue to urge every

member to look at the various leadership positions and committees and imagine what you could contribute if you were in the position. The most important asset you can have at any level is a willingness to serve and to learn the job.

Many folks have held the positions in the past and realize how important they are to the District and they would be more than willing to mentor you. Remember, Legion membership is not a spectator sport. There are many opportunities to be more active and to serve.



## 7th District

**Dean Knutson**



Greetings to the Mighty 7th!

I would like to express a sincere thank you to all the posts who came to the various posts to pick up their 2020-2021 membership packets. As of date all posts have picked them up and we are on our way on another membership year.

Remember when you are working through your membership roles, do not forget to take a look at myLegion.org and see how many additional individuals have joined the at-large Post from your area and contact them about joining your Post.

The 7th District has five myLegion.org/membership sessions set up for this year as of this date and they are Aug. 29 in Montevideo, Sept. 19 in Marshall, Oct. 10 in Alexandria, Nov. 28 in Willmar and Dec. 19 in Wheaton. All sessions start at 1 p.m. and last until 3:30 p.m. Sessions are open to anyone who wishes to find out more about

the myLegion.org program and how to process your membership through there.

We hope to see a good turnout at each one of these meetings. The 7th District had 26 posts who hit 100 percent this year with another 24 within three to five members. Thank you for all your hard work and keep it up for this next year.

I have the honor of serving as commander for another year and my slogan is "Serving America's Veterans" and my project is Legionville Operating Fund. Remember that we are all members of the American Legion Family and that includes the Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion and Legion Riders — so let's do what we can to promote the programs of the American Legion Family.

*God bless the USA and God bless the American Legion Family.*



## 8th District

**Anne Koskinen**



Greetings, 8th District Legionnaires.

A Department Executive Committee meeting was held July 18 via Zoom and went well. Our commander continues to keep The American Legion going for our state. New officers were installed (mostly the same ones due to national's suggestion). The business of the Department is your business, so please stay informed. Department adjutant reminds the Posts to get those CPRs sent in; it only takes a few minutes. Please check into the Children & Youth program going on until Sept. 1

At the Post level, Department is encouraging the return to in-person Post meetings. We all want to get back to business and socialize with our fellow Legionnaires. Please take this opportunity to bring new members in and sign them up while you show them what our Posts are doing.

I made an inquiry as to

whether a local bar (for those Posts without one) can serve as the meeting place and display the Post sign and flag. The judge advocate will look into this, but on the surface it seems appropriate.

The Department has decided on a Fall Conference at Breezy Point Resort, Oct. 22-24, so I hope that stays in our calendar as an in-person meeting. Naturally, I want you to put that on your to-do list, so go online and put in your reservation now.

I'm sorry that Legion Baseball is not going on; and without major and minor league game attendance, the whole summer seems unreal.

Follow the American Legion Twitter feed @AmericanLegion. National has been posting a lot of time sensitive information on meetings, projects, and more. Comment on tweets.



## 9th District

**Steve Sundstrom**



Hello everyone. I hope this finds everyone doing well and hopefully somewhat getting back to normal.

I hope you will indulge me for a moment. I want to say, "Hi," to my dad, a World War II veteran and a longtime member of The American Legion Post in Duluth. I'm very fortunate to say that I have the best parents that anyone could have hoped or prayed for.

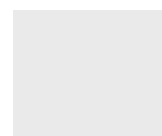
We had a Zoom meeting the other day to discuss membership. We shared a lot of information about what worked in different areas. Revitalization seemed to go well.

One downfall about calling 1982s was that you had to be prepared to call a home and find out that the member had passed. If your Posts do this this year, please be prepared to respond in a respectful manner.

I have heard from some people this happened to and were, at first, at a loss for words, feeling guilty for calling. So please be prepared for your own good and be able to say a few kind words. We also need to be looking hard for new members constantly.

Personally, in my line of work, I deal with several different vendors and I try to find out if the person I am dealing with has a military background. I have met some people who were unaware that a Post was near them, and I was able to provide them with contact information etc. to get them signed up. Please do your best and let's make our numbers grow.

*For God and Country.*



## 10th District

**Tom Allen**



Greetings from the Mighty 10th. District. As we start our new year 2021, we are busy getting everything started. We picked up the new membership packets at Department. Membership Director Daryl Harmon delivered the packets to our District vice commanders to deliver to the Posts. If there is any Post that has not received its packet, please call me at 320-250-6626.

Being that we didn't have a District Convention this year, we held our first virtual (Zoom) meeting for our Finance Committee and our 10th District Executive Board. We had a good turnout for our virtual meeting.

We had two District officers who have retired this year. Jim Copher, who has been our District Historian for many years, and Bob Larson, Wright

County vice commander. Thank you, Jim, and Bob for your service.

I see that some of our Posts are starting to open again even with all the COVID-19 regulations from the state. Keep up the good work, Legionnaires. Also, Post adjutants, don't forget to turn in your officers list to the district adjutant, Roger Stoick. His email address is rgstoick@aol.com.

We are planning our first get together at Legionville on Aug. 10, 11, 12 and 13th. If the SAL and the Department, give us the go ahead. We plan to hold our first get-together around noon on Saturday, Aug. 12. Hope to see you there.

*For God and Country*



# The Auxiliary Bulletin

No. 21 Vol. 1

President Mary Hendrickson • Secretary Marsha Bible, marsha@alamn.org

Dept. HQ: Veterans Service Building, St. Paul, MN 55155

651-224-7634

August 2020

## Oh, wait, there is quite a lot of ALA activity going on

### President's Column

Mary Hendrickson



July was a quiet month for me. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in no invitations to visit from units or VA facilities. I've been able to stay in contact with some of our members through Zoom, email, snail mail and cellphone.

Kudos go out to those units who have found creative ways to meet at a safe distance. One unit told me they met in their Post parking lot. They managed to hold a meeting while staying in or standing in front of their cars!

Zoom gave me the opportunity to meet with the 100th Anniversary Committee in mid-July. Yes, we will be celebrating our 100 years of service until July 2021. Keep those party hats, balloons and creative ideas on how to celebrate!

Thank you to committee chairman Karla Otterness for holding this committee together for three years. Plans were made to be a visible presence at Fall Conference and our annual Department Convention. Stay tuned for future updates.

I know it's hard to keep up a high level of enthusiasm when units can't physically meet face-to-face. Veterans and their families need us now more than ever before. Most of us are staying close to home. If you have computer access, this would be a great time to check out our national website: [www.alaforveterans.org](http://www.alaforveterans.org).

One new development is the creation of a new descriptor of who we are. You can download the ALA Declaration Flier or ALA Declaration Poster for free. It is made up of short sentences such as "We are of every age; We are common and extraordinary; We love our flag and all that it stands for."

I found it to be quite simple, but profound. As our national website says on its opening page "Our legacy of service continues."

While you're on the national website, you might want to download some brochures of interest. They cover such topics as membership, youth programs, Auxiliary Emergency Fund, ALA Foundation, VA&R Guide, giving opportunities and many more. I appreciate the opportunity to view the "Plan of Action" for each of our programs and being able to gather new insight with the free ALA Academy Courses. They are quick and painless and cover such topics as Communication, Establishing a Culture of Goodwill, Branding, Fundraising and How to Deal with Conflict. Don't forget to sign up for "ALA e News" or the "ALA in the Know Bulletin."

Wow, for not having anything to say, I've said a lot! I'm anxious to get back on the trail to see your Units in action and meet with my fellow Auxiliary members. Our 2020-2021 reorganization meeting involving the DEC and all our committee chairmen and committee members is scheduled for Aug. 15 at Waite Park Post 428. It will be so wonderful to see all these hard-working members in person.

God bless America. Stay happy and healthy.

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

## SHIRT MATES



Cindy Goepferd and Norma Tramm started out on May 26 to deliver the colored pocket T-shirts. The first stop was the Fergus Falls Veterans Home. Pictured are Tramm, Volunteer Service Coordinator Kathy Lehn, Goepferd and ALA Rep Doris LaFayette.

LaFayette is a very dedicated ALA member. We are lucky to have her assisting our veterans at Fergus Falls. Lehn said she was grateful for the donation of the pocket T-shirts and the veterans will be very excited to have the shirts.



On June 2, Norma Tramm took two boxes to the St. Cloud VA Health Care System with a few extra colored pocket T-shirts to be distributed out of Voluntary Services Clothing Room where American Legion Auxiliary reps work every Wednesday. At least they did before the virus and will again when conditions are better.

Tramm said: "I know that Vicki Scardina Bibeau would be so happy to see the veterans in their colored pocket T-shirts. However, I am sure that she would have been disappointed as we did not get to see the veterans. Vicki would have wanted to personally hand out the shirts. I really think she is there as they are being distributed along with a poppy for each of them."

Thanks again to all who made donations to the 6th District during her year of service. The ALA looks forward to sharing more large-size winter coats with the veterans at the St. Cloud VA.



From left are Silver Bay Veterans Home PR Coordinator Joyce Scott, ALA Rep Phyllis Mealey, Cindy Goepferd and Norma Tramm, outside the Silver Bay Veterans Home.



From left are Hastings Veterans Home Administrator Mike Anderson, Cindy Goepferd, ALA Rep Darlene Wondra and Norma Tramm, outside the Hastings Veterans Home.



From left are Norma Tramm, ALA Rep Sandra Gibson and Cindy Goepferd, outside the Minneapolis Veterans Home.

## Thanks for all the donations

On behalf of the Department of Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary Juniors I would like to thank all the American Legion Family who donated to the Junior president's project. Every member, unit and district who helped I appreciate it. A special thank you to the SAL Detachment of Minnesota for your support of the large donation. We were able to bless our five Minnesota Veterans Homes with a total of \$6,965 to share. Thank you from the bottom of my heart and we love you all.

Emily Seuss  
Honorary President  
Department of Minnesota Junior Auxiliary

Thank you to the entire American Legion Family



Love ~ Your American Legion Junior Auxiliary

## Handy tips on sending in membership info

The 2021 Membership Cards were sent to the name that we had listed for the Unit membership chairman in each unit.

Here are some helpful hints when transmitting your 2021 Membership. These help us in the office to process your membership more efficiently and accurately:

- Please list the names alphabetically on the transmittal form.
- Do not list or submit payment for PUFLS — we already have their money.
- Do not list or pay for members who have paid their dues online — we already have their money.
- Check the birthdates of your Junior members. If they turn 18 before Dec. 31, 2020,



then you must pay their dues as a senior member.

- Please print neatly so that the staff can read your transmittal.

- Make sure applications for new members are submitted and that their eligibility is verified with a signature by an officer of

the Post.

- Make sure application is signed by the new member joining.
- If paying back dues for a member, please write the year alongside the amount in the column on the transmittal form.
- Use only the most recent forms sent with the 2021 cards. Membership applications, transmittal form and the member data form have all been revised this year.

## 2020-21 ALA Dept. of Minnesota officers

Department President Mary Hendrickson  
 Department 1st Vice President Patti Coleman  
 Department 2nd Vice President Mary Kuperus  
 National Executive Committeewoman (NEC) Raleen Tolzmann  
 Alternate NEC Jean Walker  
 Department Secretary Marsha Bible  
 Department Treasurer Jan Lauby  
 Department Chaplain Cheryl Nymann  
 Department Historian Karla Otterness  
 Department Parliamentarian Norma Tramm  
 1st District President Wanda Prescher, Stewartville Unit 164  
 2nd District President Robin Olson, Winnebago Unit 82  
 3rd District President Linda Kelly, Pine Island Unit 184  
 4th District President Sandy Gibson, Rosetown Unit 542  
 5th District President Mary Younkin, Minneapolis Unit 440  
 6th District President Roberta Elvecrog, Aitkin Unit 86  
 7th District President Lorraine Wigen, Tracy Unit 173  
 8th District President Sue Korhonen, West Duluth Unit 71  
 9th District President Pat Hanson, Middle River Unit 444  
 10th District President Brandi Christianson, Delano Unit 377

# Thanks for sticking around another year

The cancellation of our Department Convention and the April 12 passage of the resolution for officers to remain a second year had only three slight revisions.

The American Legion Auxiliary executive secretary retired and a new secretary was

appointed.

Because she was the parliamentarian, a new parliamentarian has been appointed.

Department President Mary Hendrickson sends a special thank you to each of the Department officers and District presidents for agreeing to

extend their terms through the 2021 Department Convention, slated for Jackpot Junction Casino in Morton.

(See box above for a listing of 2020-21 officers.)

They are here to serve again this year. Contact any of them with questions or concerns.

## Endorsements

### Lino Lakes endorses Patti Coleman for president of Dept. of Minn.

Lino Lakes American Legion Auxiliary Unit 566, the 10th District and the 10th District Past Presidents Parley proudly endorse Patti Coleman for the office of president of the Department of Minnesota for the 2021-2022 Auxiliary year.

Coleman is a 53-year member of the American Legion Auxiliary and was gifted an Honorary Life Membership in 2001. She is eligible for membership through the service of her late father, Gerald J. Coleman, a Navy veteran 1951-1953. Coleman's significant other, Larry Woods Sr., served 11 years in the Air Force, 1973-1984.

Coleman has served our Unit in most capacities. She was an active Junior Auxiliary member and graduated to senior membership in 1983. She has held most chairmanships and held all the offices in our Unit, most many times. Coleman is currently serving as our membership chairman and is our first vice president. Her first term as Unit president was 1991-1992. Coleman is a valued mentor of Unit 566 helping to recruit, welcome and teach our new members about the American Legion Auxiliary and our programs.

In the 10th District, Coleman has been the chairman of Public Relations, National Security, Girls State, Children & Youth, Membership, Finance, Past Presidents Parley, Leadership-4 terms, Standing Rules, Junior Activities and History. Coleman carries on the legacy of her parents, by organizing the 10th District Snowmobile Rally which they started in 1972. This rally will celebrate

50 continuous years in January 2021.

Coleman was elected to serve as the 10th District President in 2000-2001. She also served as 10th District first vice president, second vice president and on the 10th District Executive Committee. She has also served as the District historian, District parliamentarian and the advisor to the District president three times.

For the Department of Minnesota, Coleman has volunteered as a staff member at ALA Minnesota Girls State for 24 sessions, starting in 1986. She has been the Department color bearer, ALA MN Girls State director four times, the Convention Resolutions chairman twice, the Convention sergeant-at-arms, Gift Shop Committee member, Audit Committee member, ALA Minnesota Girls State Education director, and ALA Minnesota Girls State Committee member.

Coleman has been the Department Community Service chairman, Junior Activities chairman, ALA Minnesota Girls State chairman, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation chairman and is currently in the extended year of being the legislative chairman. She served as Department second vice president for 2018-2019 and is the Department first vice president in this extended year 2019-2021. Coleman is also on the 100th Anniversary Committee for the Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary.



**Patti Coleman**

Coleman started attending Department Fall Conferences and Department Conventions as a child and has continued her attendance throughout her years of membership. She has attended 10 National Conventions, three Region 6 Conferences, two ALA Girls State Conferences and five Northwest Division Mission Training Meetings. Coleman is a certified leadership instructor for the American Legion Auxiliary, and she was Field Service-certified.

Patti and Larry are the very proud parents of one daughter, Kiana, who is a Past Department of Minnesota Honorary Junior president and Past Honorary National Northwestern Division vice president. Her deceased mother, Pat Coleman, was 10th District president in 1983-1984.

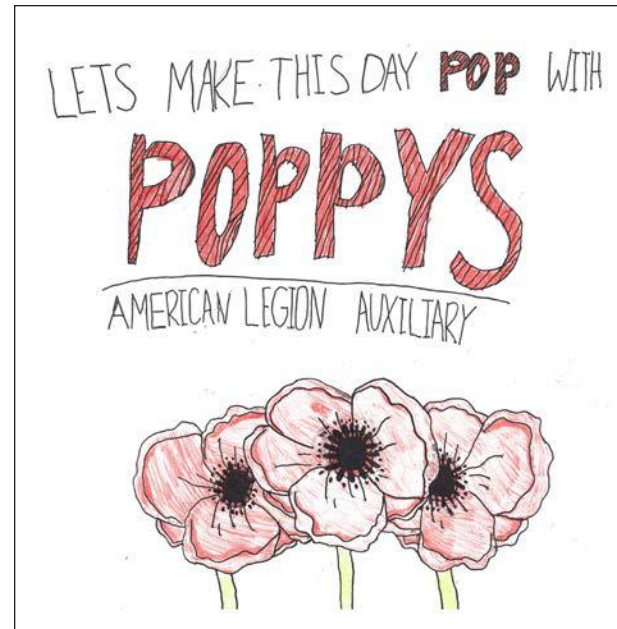
Coleman is employed by Antea USA Inc. as an accounting specialist. She belongs to Cabane 390 of the 40 et 8 and VFW Auxiliary 425 in Hopkins and is a member of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Circle Pines.

The members of Lino Lakes Unit 566 are very confident in Coleman's knowledge of the ALA and her leadership abilities. We are proud to endorse her for president for the Department of Minnesota for 2021-2022.

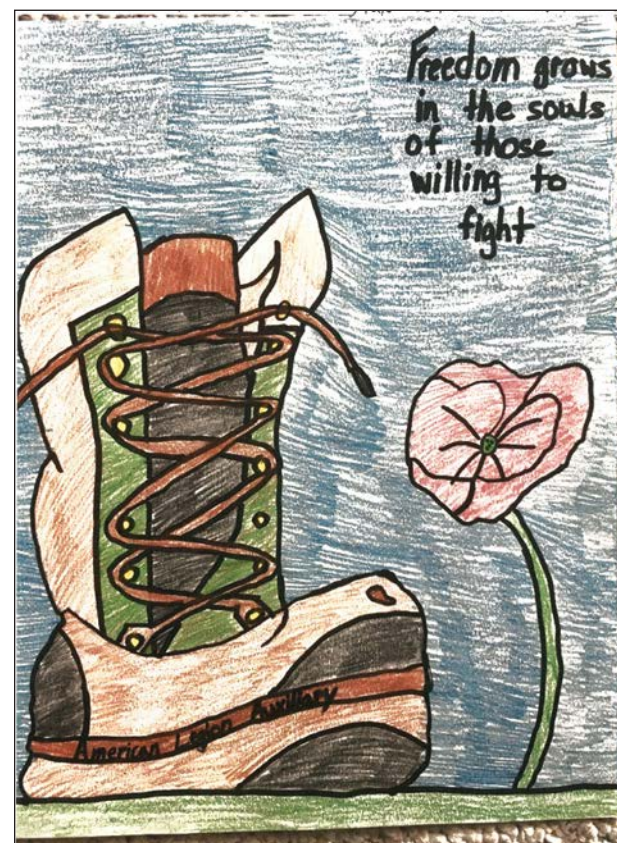
**Michelle Lesch  
 President  
 Lino Lakes Unit 566**



**Addie Athman, Pierz, Pierz Unit 341, Class I**



**Alexia Jones, Maple Grove, Unit XXX, Class II**



**Dylan Widner, Argyle, Argyle Unit 353, Class III**



**Regan Trisko, Cold Spring, Jordan Unit 3, Class IV**

## Poppy Poster winners named

Department Poppy Chairman Sandy Wersal has selected the winners of the Auxiliary Poppy Poster Contest for the year.

The winners are:

Class I: Addie Athman of Pierz  
 Class II: Alexia Jones of Maple Grove  
 Class III: Dylan Widner of Argyle  
 Class IV: Regan Trisko of Cold Spring

## Upcoming events

Aug. 15: August Workshop and Department Executive Committee Meeting at Waite Park Post 428

Sept. 12: Harvest Rally, Membership Turn-in for Auxiliary at Legionville

Sept. 19: Hospital and Home Representative Meeting at Waite Park Post 428.

Oct. 22-24: Fall Conference at Breezy Point Resort near Nisswa

## Memorial for Vicki Lynne Scardina Bibeau

The memorial for Vicki Bibeau that was previously scheduled for April has tentatively been rescheduled for 11 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 13 at Legionville.

Due to the restrictions of COVID-19, this event will be held in an outdoor shelter. There will be no accessible buildings including restrooms. It is suggested that you bring a comfortable chair. Please remember that even though this is outdoors, social distancing will be observed and everyone should mask up.

In the event that there are any changes, notification will be on the Department website and the American Legion Auxiliary Facebook page. Bibeau was a past president of both the 8th and 6th districts and was serving as Department Community Service chairman at the time of her death.

## Certificates of merit and awards

In a normal year the winners of the Presidents Awards of Excellence and Unit Certificates of Merit for 2019-2020 would be distributed at the Department Convention.

We thank all the units who persevered and still submitted their annual reports even though they couldn't meet and complete them as a unit. Our units can be proud of this year's accomplishments.

The Certificates of Merit will be included in the first unit mailing in September. The Presidents Awards of Excellence will be presented at Fall Conference. These are based on the annual reports and the activities carried on under each program and were selected by the appropriate Department Chairman.




**WE ARE CALLED  
 TO SERVE**



On June 3, the 4th District of The American Department of Minnesota, in conjunction with Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, donated \$500 worth of goodies to deployed members of Minnesota National Guard, which were deployed at the time in response to riots in the Twin Cities. Members brought the goods to St. Paul Park Post 98. Local members of the American Legion Riders then delivered the goods to the Guard.



From left are Department of Minnesota Historian Mike Ash, John Weiss with the American Legion Riders, Deacon Roehl with the Riders, Department Vice Commander Teresa Ash, Department Sergeant-at-Arms Richard Skillestad, Bree England with the Auxiliary Juniors and Mark Maloney with the Riders. Kneeling are Ervin "Twiggy" Ruiz of the Riders and St. Paul Park Post 98 Finance Officer Ray Kane.



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## LEGIONNAIRE INSURANCE TRUST Silver and Gold Health Discount Plans

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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
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