



Legionnaire

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For God and Country

March 2017

World War I to be featured in new display at the History Center



Visitors to the exhibit will have a chance to see artist David Geister paint a mural.

World War I, the Great War, the War to End All Wars, brought many things to America: Enhanced international clout, women's rights, industrial growth, a migration of black people to the northern states, and a major flu epidemic.

The end of the war also brought the soldiers and sailors home, and the creation of The American Legion.

That war, so important in our history and so little studied in America, will be the subject of a new exhibit, "WWI America" at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul beginning April 8.

"That war impacted everything in America," Exhibit Curator Brian Horrigan said. "America walked through that door in April 1917, when we entered the war, and we've never been the same."

The opening of the exhibit will com-

memorate the 100th anniversary of entrance of America into the Great War in April 1917. The display will run through Sept. 4.

"It's a complicated story," said Randal Dietrich, program specialist at MHS. "The focus of the exhibit will be more on what was happening over here rather than over there."

Dietrich said the war had tremendous impact in the U.S. "The making of modern America was shaped by the World War I experience."

One of the features of the exhibit will be a huge mural, eight feet high by 30 feet long, that will be actually be painted while people are viewing the exhibit this summer. It will be done by Minnesota artist David Geister.

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DEC establishes new state committee to promote training

LEGIONVILLE – The Department of Minnesota Executive Committee has established a new statewide committee to deal with training.

The three person committee will focus on the education and training of the leadership of the Minnesota American Legion at the Department, district, county and post levels.

The new group, called the Education and Training Committee, will begin its work immediately with appointments made by Department Commander Denise Milton. One appointment will be for three years,

one of two years and one for one year.

Future commanders will make appointments as terms expire.

The resolution that was passed unanimously by the DEC, meeting at Legionville, cited the change in leadership each year, the new technology and the need for an informed leadership to move the organization ahead.

The resolution was brought to the floor by a three-person ad hoc resolutions committee made up of Bill Barbknect, Sy Fix and chairman Mike Maxa.

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National Commander's Tour



National Commander Charles Schmidt spoke at McGregor, one of 10 stops he made in Minnesota. More photos on pages 10-11.

Charles Schmidt visits 10 posts in Minnesota swing

National Commander Charles Schmidt traveled nearly a thousand miles, visited 10 posts and greeted about 735 Legionnaires and others along the way in early February.

Schmidt, who hails from Oregon, traveled with Department Commander Denise Milton and Membership Director Mark Dvorak on a swing through the Gopher State that began in the far north and ended in the Twin Cities.

"Make something good happen in the American Legion," he told those gathered at Bagley. "That's what we do, we make something happen."

The second day of the tour meant travel through a heavy snowstorm as the van went from one side of northern Minnesota to the other.

He urged Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, SAL and Riders to make an impact. "Leave your footsteps on this organization. You are important, this is where the rubber meets the road," he said in Bena.

At Hibbing he noted that membership has been on a steady decline for many years, but it was time to stop the slide. "As we say in the Air Force, grab the stick, pull it back, let's go up again."

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GEORGE LEACH MINNEAPOLIS



joins the
Minnesota
American
Legion Military
Hall of Fame
Pages 12-14

PNC John Brieden will speak at Milton Testimonial

Past National Commander John Brieden, who served from 2003-04, will be the keynote speaker at the testimonial for Department Commander Denise Milton.

The testimonial will be held at the Shooting Star Casino in Mahanomen on Saturday, May 6.

Brieden is a native of Texas, growing up in Corpus Christi. He served in the Army for five years, and was discharged as a captain in the 75th Ranger Regiment (Airborne).

In recent years, Brieden was elected Judge of Washington County, a position he still holds. He is also an agent for the State Farm Insurance Co.

He now resides in Brenham, Texas.

Rooms have been set aside at the casino for those who

Continued on Page 2



WASHINGTON CONFERENCE -- Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, Red Wing, and Rep. Jason Lewis, R-Minn., talk over veterans issues. More on pages 8-9.

Milt Schoen, dean of state's CVSOs, retires from Hennepin Co.

By Al Zdon

Milt Schoen, before his recent retirement, might have been considered the dean of Minnesota County Veteran Service Officers.

Schoen, 68, had been a CVSO for 32 years, the last 24 as the head of the Hennepin County office. He has been active in the statewide CVSO organization, The American Legion, and in dozens of projects through the years to help veterans.

"The veterans service officer now gets much more training, and that's so important," Schoen said. "But the main thing for a good CVSO is to care about the people standing in front of you."

Schoen said the Minnesota CVSO system is regarded as one of the top three in the nation.

"As I look back, I think of veterans who had addictions and never had a chance in the world, who got straightened out and had good lives. I think of others battling with PTSD who were able to get treatment and follow their dreams.

"Being a CVSO is honorable work, noble work, very rewarding work. You can change a lot of lives."

Schoen grew up in Duluth and moved to Robbinsdale when he was 15. He graduated from Robbinsdale High School and went to two years of college before being drafted during the Vietnam War.

He was assigned to the 82nd Airborne and later volunteered to become a paratrooper. He was assigned to Germany as part of a clandestine unit called Detachment A Berlin Brigade that was on the front line of the Cold War.

After the war, Schoen held various jobs, worked with non-profits, and in 1984 became an assistant CVSO with Hennepin County. He took over as director in 1994 and held that position until he retired this past month.

Some of his work was on the volunteer side of helping veterans. He was appointed legislative chairman of the Minnesota American Legion by then Commander Virgil Persing in 1995, and the major task was trying to get a bonus passed for the Persian Gulf veterans.

"The World War II, Korean, and Vietnam vets had all gotten bonuses. But the Persian Gulf bonus had been held

up for four or five years. Our stand was that you might not like the war, but we've got to appreciate the people who served."

Schoen and other veteran leaders finally got the measure to a vote. "Someone asked me, 'What if we lose?' I said, 'Let's just get it up for a vote.'" It passed, and the Persian Gulf veterans got their bonus.

Schoen said his years working as a veterans service officer was a continuous learning experience. "I learned from the best: Hank Sadler, Duane Kruger, Bob Davis just to name a few."

One of the biggest accomplishments Minnesota made during his years, particularly in the post-911 era, was the reintegration of state soldiers back to civilian life after a deployment. The state sent teams of CVSOs and others to Camp McCoy and other places to meet the troops as they came home and make sure they understood their benefits.

Partly because of that effort, over 98 percent of returning National Guard veterans were enrolled in the federal Veterans Administration medical system.

"The key was that nobody was defending their turf, they just wanted to get the job done for these veterans."

A problem with veterans still in the Guard or other service is that they are reluctant to seek help, sometimes for professional reasons. "Having a mental health condition is not a career enhancer. Others thought that by admitting any problem, they were letting their buddies down. They had a warrior mentality.

"Over the years I've seen so many veterans in their late 50s who have had three or four divorces, three or four DWIs, a series of jobs. They're life has been hell. If somebody had just been there, they could have had a decent life."

Another success was the introduction of the Veterans Court into Hennepin County and other places in 2010 and thereafter.

"Guilt was not the issue for veterans who had gotten in trouble with the law or whatever. We needed to get at the underlying behavior. If they were an addict, we needed to treat them. If they were angry all the time, we needed to get them into anger management."

Another success was in the number of units of homeless veteran housing that have been built in Minnesota in recent years, including over 100 units sponsored by Hennepin County. "It gives veterans a place to go to restart their lives."

The professionalism of the CVSO system has also been a success story. "The grants program authorized by the state



MILT SCHOEN

has been powerful. The training has increased, and it allowed everyone in the state to computerize."

What's the challenge in the future? "It's unfortunate, but as we get further from war, getting benefits for our veterans becomes tougher. It's like baseball. When there's a war on, the strike zone is bigger. In peacetime, the strike zone shrinks.

"We all want peace, but the challenge will be getting the best for people. It's going to get tighter."

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PNC JOHN BRIEDEN

Brieden to speak at Testimonial

Continued from Page 1
are attending.

To reserve a room, call the casino at 1-800-453-7827. The Hotel group rate code is 3729.

The testimonial will kick off with a social hour at 4 p.m. followed by dinner at 6 p.m. with the program to follow.

Commander Milton was elected Department Commander at the 2016 Department Convention at Rochester.

Reservations can be mailed to Dennis Henkemeyer at PO Box L, Bagley, MN 56621.

The cost per ticket is \$30.

Reservations much be received by April 28.

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WWI exhibit

Continued from Page 1

The MHS has selected 100 key people who created post-World War I America, to be shown in the mural, and the public will have a chance to vote on where they should be placed in the piece of art. One of those figures is Harry Colmery, The American Legion Past Commander who authored the GI Bill during World War II.

Dietrich said the mural is modeled after the "Pantheon de la Guerre," a French mural that stretched some 400 feet and was painted during the war. A surviving section of that mural, about 100 feet, is still on display at the World War I Museum in Kansas City.

The mural will not just be a celebratory thing, it will show modern America for what it is. For instance, one of the people in the mural is Al Capone, the gangster. The war was complicated and messy. History is usually pretty messy."

"People will be able to see the production of the mural and watch the artist create it," Dietrich said.

The war also set the stage for World War II, and most of the major leaders in that war had their origins in World War I. "All the major characters of World War II – Patton, Truman, Eisenhower, Hitler, Mussolini – participated in World War I, they just had a different rank."

The Spanish Flu, which did not come from Spain but originated probably in China, was one of the worst epidemics in world history. The first case in the United States was at a Kansas training camp in March 1918. The war helped spread the disease world-wide, and by the end of the year it killed an estimated 50 to 100 million people, more than the war itself.

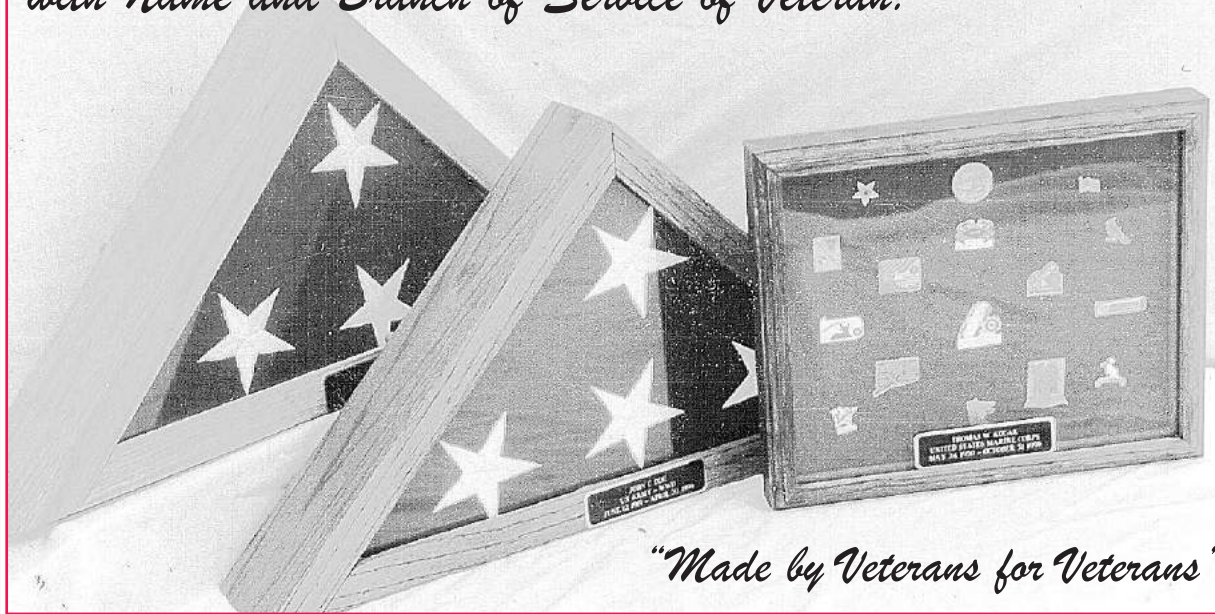
Admission to the World War I exhibit is included in the regular admission fee to the history center's galleries: \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors and college students, \$6 for children over five. Active military and veterans get a \$2 discount.

"It was one of the great turning points in our history," Horrigan said. "It changed who we. The American Legion came out of that war."



TIMBERWOLVES GAME -- Waite Park Post 428 Color Guard, the Department's official color guard, presented the American flag at the Minnesota Timberwolves game in February.

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"FOR THE AMERICAN LEGION, I WILL."

Minneapolis is hosting the 100th national convention in 2018. Our great state was the site of the 1st convention and will now host this historic event. The National Convention Corporation of Minnesota is inviting all Legionnaires and posts to say "For The American Legion, I Will" and contribute towards our **Beginning the Second Century of Service** Campaign. Gifts can be directed towards Minnesota's hosting responsibilities for the convention or The American Legion Minnesota Foundation to support programming throughout our state. For more information, please visit www.mnlegion.org and click on 100th National Convention Information.

DO YOU KNOW OF A COMPANY THAT MAY FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THE 100TH CONVENTION THROUGH SPONSORSHIP, ADVERTISING OR GIVING?

There are sponsorship, advertisement and giving opportunities for businesses. If you know of a company that may want to take part in the 100th convention, please contact Michael Davy at (612) 247-9960 or mdavy@mnlegion.org.

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COMMANDER'S COLUMN

By Denise Milton



Greetings Fellow Legionnaires.

I want to thank all who attended our Sweetheart Rally in New Prague – what a success. Great food, wonderful company and a fantastic venue. What an amazing ballroom with plenty of room for visiting, dancing and friendly auctioneering. A review of the 2016 National Oratorical and Boys Nation winners reminded us of the wonderful programs we provide for the youth of our nation. Listening to them I am confident that America will be in good hands. To top it off we had almost 1,200 memberships turned in for the rally. Way to go. As Membership Director Mark reminded us, our primary aim is to reach our goal of 77,000 by convention time. I know that we can do it by continuing to work together as a team. Thank you for your continued hard work.

“Accentuate the Positive” was the recurring theme throughout National Commander Charles Schmidt’s visit to Minnesota. For those of you that attended one of the scheduled stops please share his inspirational message with your fellow comrades. Every one of us is a stakeholder as a member of The American Legion. We all have a vested interest in wanting to remain the largest VSO in the world. National Commander Schmidt is asking each of us to sign up one new member. Just think of it, that would mean over four million members. Let’s stop the slide. He reminded us to “make something good happen.”

Commander Schmidt quoted Mahatma Gandhi, “the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of oth-

Mail Call

History Books

To the Editor:

My fellow Department of Minnesota American Legion members: Hard to believe we are halfway through the membership year already. I am sure all the Post and District Historians are busy compiling the history books for the year. This should not be a surprise to anyone. Just a quick note from myself to all of you. When I assumed duties as Department Historian, I said the history contest would be well attended with many entries. The format is in the Officer Manual, pages 147-156. This year's contest is triple tiered. First, is the Post contest- best entry wins. Second is the District Historian, the best District history book wins, and finally, the District with the highest percentage of entrants will win.

The history program is much more important than has been run in the past. How can we have a good record of all our accomplishments and actions serving our fellow veterans and our organization if we don't record it, how can we know and tell new prospects and new members of what we are about. The history leads to public relations, which is what we are doing now and in the near future. Once we've established the fact we are a vibrant, living veterans service organization that serves America and most importantly our fellow veterans and families, wouldn't we have a much stronger argument for overcoming objections when recruiting and retaining members?

Finally, posts need to get registered on the Centennial page. Commander Milton wants 100% participation in this. Concurrently we are asking for all posts to take pictures of their post and any memorials you might have, along with a short narrative and send them to www.postpics@mnlegion.org. We are putting together, in video format, a presentation at this year's national convention in Reno showcasing our posts and all the great memorials that the great state and department of Minnesota American Legion family has. Questions may be directed to myself at schneekloth@gmail.com or my cell 507.438.6319.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving as Department Historian.

Ralph Schneekloth
Mabel

Kline Departs

To the Editor:

As you may know, Congressman Kline will be retiring from Congress after serving the constituents of the 2nd Congressional district for 14 years. As he finalizes his service and we conclude operations, I wanted to reach out one last time.

Throughout his time in Congress, your feedback as a veterans and military stakeholder has been invaluable. With

ers.” Barring some snowy roads “up north” and yours truly experiencing a “wardrobe malfunction” we had a successful tour.

If you would like to view/download photos of the tour, National Commander's Aide Dirk Levy has made them available at: ImageEvent.com/Legacy forward. Pictures are also available on our state Legion website, mnlegion.org. Just click on photos.

We just returned from the Washington DC Conference where we get the time and opportunity to meet our elected representatives and senators to lobby for veterans' benefits. We also attended various commission meetings for Marketing, VA&R, Employment and Education, Finance, Legislative and National Security prior to going to “the Hill.”

I got the opportunity to hear the National Commander's testimony to Congress. What an experience, it makes me proud to be a veteran and a member of The American Legion. We must remain a strong and relevant veterans service organization. We can do this by growing our membership and completing our CPR's (Consolidated Post Reports) which is used as evidence when our National Commander testifies before Congress. I'd like to thank our Department Legislative Chairman Peggy Moon for making our visits productive and successful.

Please Don't forget “Vets on the Hill” on 20 March at 10 a.m. in St Paul at the State Capitol. Please make an appointment early to see your respective elected officials. Further information will be distributed/available from Peggy Moon or your respective district legislative chair. Let's have as many ‘hats’ in the rotunda as we can. Let's make a difference.

Please don't forget our homeless veterans or those that may be on the verge of being homeless. My project, MAC-V encompasses every county in the state working closely with our county social service agencies.

I look forward to seeing everyone at Legionville for the Appreciation Rally which is a time to acknowledge an outstanding vice commander from each district.

We have something new and exciting coming your way. It is a comprehensive training program for all levels of our membership. This is open to everyone who has a desire to learn and improve our organization. It is scheduled for June 23 through June 25 at the Brainerd Post and Legionville.

your help, Congressman Kline fought for Minnesota veterans, servicemen and servicewomen of the Minnesota National Guard, and all of those serving in active duty here in the United States and all over the globe. Serving fourteen years as an active and dedicated Member on the House Committee on Armed Services, Congressman Kline supported our men and women returning from deployments by expanding the successful Minnesota Yellow Ribbon service member reintegration program nationwide, ensured returning servicemembers kept the leave they earned through the PDMRA program, called on the Army to ensure Minnesota National Guard's ability to assist victims of military sexual trauma, and passed legislation that ensures our servicemen and servicewomen who are called to serve in the middle of their college careers aren't unfairly harmed due to their military commitments.

This sampling of achievements represents a small fraction of the efforts untaken by Congressman Kline that were made possible by your continued advocacy.

On behalf of Congressman Kline, and all of his staff over the years, I would like to thank you for your role in his efforts. We sincerely appreciate your feedback, expertise, and input on policy issues that affect you.

Connor Lentz, Legislative Assistant
Washington D.C.

Army Green

To the Editor:

Civilians volunteer at the nearest recruiter. If they choose the Army, they'll be a “green suiter.” Sign the papers, and then off to basic. You volunteered. No, it ain't a trick. Off the bus and then stand in line. The drill sergeant is yelling, he's feeling just fine. Got your attention, didn't he?

Oh, my. Tee hee. Tee hee. Off to the barber or hair salon if you prefer. Look in the mirror. You no longer look like who you were. On to the barracks with your new buddies. Constant training and military studies.

Eight weeks later you're finally done. On to AIT, maybe in the hot sun. More of the same. It ain't over yet. Then on to duty stations whose needs will be met. Your jobs are necessary in peacetime and in war. Hopefully bloodshed will be no more.

Scott Sjostrand
Hallock

Chaplain's Corner

By
Bill Brockberg



Who Believes in the Power of Prayer?

As I embark on a vision of leading the Department in prayer in this month of March, I still have in the back of my mind a couple of points remembered from last month and the Four Chaplains. One was the selfless service they demonstrated, but the other one which was not emphasized was their consistency and unwavering dedication to their respective “spiritual light.”

This consistency in belief in a higher power and how that power can work in and for an individual, a family, a congregation or a Veterans' organization, has to be held onto and with all of one's heart and mind.

Just as a Legionnaire tries to encourage a fellow veteran to join The American Legion, if the Legionnaire's heart isn't in his or her sales approach and if that Legionnaire is doubtful or inconsistent on what the Legions stands for, then that recruiting attempt will be a struggle at best. We call with humility and goodness in our hearts, and certainly not out of frustration or disappointment, that with those of whom we are associated with or what circumstances we wish to navigate and overcome, best interests will be served as a heavenly father deems so.

This premise or thought brings me to a story of a court case supposedly from Mount Vernon, Texas. Diamond D's brothel began construction on an expansion of their building to increase their ever-growing business. In response, a local Church across the street started a campaign to block the business from expanding – with morning, afternoon and evening prayer sessions at their church.

Work on Diamond D's meanwhile progressed right up until the week before the grand reopening when lightning struck the brothel and burned it to the ground.

After Diamond D's was destroyed by the lighting strike, the church folks were rather smug in their outlook, bragging about “the power of prayer.”

One week later, Jill Diamond, the owner and madam, sued the church, the preacher and the entire congregation on the grounds that the church...”was ultimately responsible for the demise of her building and her business – either through direct or indirect divine actions or means.”

In its reply to the court, the church vehemently and voraciously denied any and all responsibility or any connection to the building's demise.

The crusty old judge read through the plaintiff's complaint and defendant's reply, and at the opening hearing he commented, “I don't know how on earth I'm going to decide this case, but it appears from the paperwork, that we now have a whorehouse owner who staunchly believes in the power of prayer and an entire church congregation that thinks it's all baloney!”

Given the circumstances of this case, I guess it would be difficult for those church members to get through the book of Colossians in the Holy Bible, chapter 1:23, “may you always continue in your faith, established and firm.” For Legionnaires, and anyone, who wishes to call and pray for grace, love, help, kindness and guidance, the power of God is omnipresent and omnipotent.

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”

Hebrews: 10:23

The Minnesota Legionnaire

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Al Zdon, Editor

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What's Happening

Kottom Testimonial

The testimonial dinner for Department President Carol Kottom will be held at the Buffalo Post 270 on Saturday, March 25. Social hour will be at 3 p.m. with the program at 4 and dinner at 5. Karaoke will follow.

Tickets are \$16 per person with a choice of entrees: stuffed pork chop or stuffed chicken breast. RSVPs can be made to Marilyn Miller, 404 Division St., Buffalo, MN 55313, phone 763-682-4796. Please indicate choice of dinners and number, name, phone number and amount enclosed. Checks can be payable to ALA Unit 270. Tickets will be at the door. Deadline is March 18.

Olwold Testimonial

The testimonial dinner for SAL Detachment Commander Gene Olswold will be at Redwood Falls Post 38 on Saturday, April 22. The social will be at 5 p.m. with dinner at 6 and the program to follow. The meal will be a turkey dinner for \$15.

RSVPs can be sent to Vida Bacon, 110 N. Payne Street, New Ulm, MN 56073, phone 507-276-8538, or to Jeanette Mertens, 100 Industrial Drive, Redwood Falls, MN 56283, phone 507-828-7666. Please indicate number attending, name, and address. Checks should be payable to Redwood Falls Post 38. Deadline is April 8, and tickets will be available at the door.

Round Tables

The Civil War Roundtable will meet March 27 at the Lowell Inn for a dinner meeting. The subject will be "The Hughes Family of Hudson, and the 4th Wisconsin Regiment." Michael Hughes will speak.

For more information call Steve, 715-386-1268. There will also be a Civil War Symposium on Saturday, April 8, beginning at 9:15 a.m. at the Fort Snelling History Center. Registration is \$10 per person with advanced registration recommended. Lunch will be \$15. Write to TCCWRT at 5540 Sanibel Drive, Minnetonka, 55343 for a registration form.

Topics include Gen. Longstreet, Sgt. Richard Kirkland, and Fort Snelling.

The World War II History Round Table will have a program on Minnesota native Gen. Lesley J. McNair, who was

responsible for training U.S. troops in the war, by Mark Calhoun. The program will be March 23 at 7 p.m. at the Fort Snelling History Center. Admission is \$5. Students are free as are World War II veterans.

Legion Day at Twins

The annual Legion Family Day at the Minnesota Twins will be Friday, May 19, at 7:10 p.m. at Target Field. The game will feature the Twins vs. Kansas City Royals. Tickets are \$23 in the Home Plate View section.

Commander Denise Milton will throw out the first pitch. All posts at the game will have their name on the scoreboard.

To get tickets, call 1-800-33-Twins and hit the 0 to speak to an attendant. At the start of the call, reference the special American Legion promotion. Credit cards are acceptable with a \$5 service charge for each order. Tickets will be mailed. If you have a group of 25 or more, or any questions, call Nick Corcoran at 612-659-4083.

Turkey Hunt

The annual Physically Disabled Veterans Turkey Hunt will be held May 9-11 at Camp Ripley. It is sponsored by the state's veterans service organizations, the National Guard and the DNR. Applications are available up to March 20 and may be found on the Legion's website, mnlegion.org. For more information, call 320-380-4569.

Military Appreciation Night

A ceremony to honor the nation's military will be held as part of the Twin Cities Auto Show at the Minneapolis Convention Center on Tuesday, March 14, sponsored by SuperAmerica. The program will include color guards from the Legion and VFW, and the 34th Division Band.

For more information, go to twincitiesautoshow.com.

Drop-in Legal Clinics

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans will sponsor a series of free drop-in legal clinics for veterans. They will include info on housing, employment, benefits, wills, debt collection and family law. For more information, call 651-200-4750. The clinics include:

-- Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Tuesday, March 14, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Flag Atrium Balcony Room.

-- St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Tuesday, April 18, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Auditorium, Building 8.

-- Rochester American Legion Post 92, Thursday, March 30, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., 315 First Avenue NW.

Legacy Run Planned

The Minnesota American Legion Riders Legacy Run dates have been slated for this year. The first run will be held from July 28-30 and the second run will be Aug. 4-6. There will be a kick-off party on July 27.

For more information, call 218-270-8293 and leave a message. Information on stops will also be available on MNLegacyrun.org.

Training Program

The Department of Minnesota will have a training program on June 23 at the Brainerd Post and also at Legionville School Patrol Training Camp, just north of Brainerd. The program will be aimed at leaders at the Department, district, county and post level. But all those who are interested in the Legion and becoming a leader are encouraged to attend. The training will be fun and informative. For more information, contact Jeff Gay at 507-933-4576.

8th District Change

The 8th District has changed the dates of its district convention from June 3 to Saturday, April 22. It is being held at West Duluth Post 71.

WWI vet info sought

Information is being sought on Private Theodor Holanbeck of Rutledge. He was killed in France on Sept. 30, 1918. He served in the 54th Infantry.

A group in the Alsace part of France is planning a commemoration ceremony for Americans killed in that region for September 2018. Holanbeck will be one of those honored. Holanbeck had relatives in Pine County, and he enlisted at Kettle River.

If you have any info please contact Hubert Martin at martinhub.wanadoo.fr.



OUTSTANDING VICE COMMANDERS HONORED -- One vice commander from each district was honored at the Appreciation Rally at Legionville in March. From left: Membership Director Mark Dvorak; Robert Larson, District 10; Arlo Rude, District 9; Marvin Hill, District 8; Garylee Davenport accepting for Orwill Wigen, District 7; Veronica Fernlund accepting for Frederick Rogers, District 6; Walt Lyndsley, District 5; Lane Stunkel, District 4; Robert Hart, District 3; Lucinda Brunk, District 2; Myron Ehrich, District 1; Department Commander Denise Milton. The Legion was first in the nation in membership at the time of the rally.

Appreciation Rally at Legionville Camp

High percentage leaders at the end of the rally were: Legion, 6th District, 93.76 percent; Auxiliary, 6th District, 89.09 percent; SAL, 5th District, 100.27 percent.



President Carol Kottom presented Zandra Kessler and her membership team with commemorative mugs.



A large crowd gathered at the Legionville training center for the Appreciation Rally.



Bob Larson presented a check for \$10,000 to Commander Denise Milton for her project this year -- homeless veterans.

Sons of The American Legion

By Gene Olsword



A big welcome to The American Legion Family. February was rather a quiet month compared to some of my past months on the road. Of all my visits, the highlight of these visits was going to Mound Post 398 to share the dinner evening with National Commander Charles Schmidt on his last stop of his Minnesota Tour. What a tremendous man he is and a very eloquent speaker. If you didn't take the opportunity to visit Commander Schmidt on his tour, you really missed out on a lot. A great leader for The American Legion.

Renewal time for your 2017 Membership is still ongoing. I really cannot emphasize this enough. Your continuing membership within our organization is one more vote and voice for our National Leaders to take to Washington D.C. in support on how Congress votes on Veteran issues. They need our voice for passage with many issues regarding our Veterans and our brothers- and sisters-in-arms. Please renew your membership if you have not already done so and for those of you that have renewed-thank you.

Unlike the dues of The American Legion, ours are still very minimal in comparison but yet we still have the same benefits. One of the main benefits of being an SAL member is the benefit of the American Legion Hospital Association. Of your annual dues, we take 25 cents for up to a \$3,000.00 benefit for you. But in order to receive this, you have to have been a member for at least one year and a current member and in good standing. Minnesota is the only state in the Nation to have such a program. What a great benefit this alone is. Tie this in with the other programs of the Legion you are entitled to, your dollars go a long ways for your continued membership. If you have not done so yet, RENEW TODAY. This also shows your Honor you give your family forefathers for their sacrifices they gave when called upon in defense of our Nation. If they had not done this, we may not have this Great Nation we have today. Continue to Honor their service as this is our way of saying "Thank You for what you did for us today". Sign up a qualified applicant so he can stand in our ranks and beside you. Our qualifications for membership are the same as the legions for periods of service during conflicts.

As I have said in the past and will always continue to say - "Let's get 'er done."

DEC establishes training committee

Continued from Page 1

Commander Milton told the DEC that a statewide training session has been slated for Brainerd and Legionville on June 23-25. The annual card pickup for districts will be held at the same time.

The resolution passed unanimously.

In other business, the DEC:

— Heard from LIT Committee Chairman Barbknecht that it's likely the free accidental death and dismemberment policy the insurance company offers to Legion members may be increased to \$2,500 in the near future.

— Was told by Legionville Manager Roy Kruger that the camp is now being used by area recruiters to help get recruits ready for boot camp. He said a military fair was also in the works.

— Was informed by Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl that a bill in the Minnesota Legislature for \$222,000 to remodel the camp's kitchen and dining room had been approved by the House and Senate veterans committees and was to be presented to the Legacy Fund committee shortly.

— Approved a plan brought forth by the Baseball Committee to enter an agreement with a group called Legion Baseball Hub. The contract calls for allowing the Hub company to use the Legion logo on its website, which delivers news about Legion baseball and the state tournaments. In return, the company will provide the state Legion baseball program with money earned from advertising on the website. Mike Perry, State Baseball Director, said the final details of the contract are still being worked out, but he said the money will allow the baseball program to keep its fees reasonable, or to even reduce them.



MILITARY RADIO -- Legislative Chair Peggy Moon and Department Commander Denise Milton talked legislation with Minnesota Military Radio host Tom Lyons.

American Legion Riders

By Chuck Stone
Department Director



Greetings American Legion Family,
The Planning committee for the Annual Department Legacy ride recently held its second meeting. It was great to see such a large turnout. A number of the overnights have been established yet there is plenty of room for stops along the way. A big question brought up was the processing of donation checks, where to send them and who to make them out to. Please make checks out to: Minnesota American Legion Foundation and on the memo line put fund 84. They can be mailed to: American Legion Department of Minnesota, 20 West 12th St., 300A, St. Paul, MN 55155-2000. Or you can present you donation at any one of our meetings. A third option is to give it to one of the Riders at your post or in your area and they will get it to the proper location. All donations are welcome, there is no limit to the size big or small. Our next meeting will be Saturday March 4th high noon at Legionville, hope to see you there.

I see a number of Riders have gotten their bikes out taking advantage of the unseasonably warm weather we had in February. If you were one of them hopefully you were able to get the bike back under cover before the snow returned. Hopefully this snow wont last too long and spring will bring us an early start to the riding season.

Another district recently completed its organization getting it SOP approved by their district executive board. Job well done Fifth District. The Second District is working on their SOP and should have theirs in place soon.

Please keep all of your Chapter activity event requests coming. Often times I have three or more on the same day. I try to make as many as possible. If I dont make it to yours don't feel left out it is just as disheartening to me when I have to pick and choose where to go. If only we had more weekends on the calendar.

The National Commander blew through Minnesota on a whirl wind tour. I had the pleasure of having dinner with Commander Chuck in Mound. I presented him with a Department of Minnesota Riders coin. In return I received on of his. I also told him that we have high expectations of being number one in the nation once again when we step on stage in Reno with our donation the Legacy fund. Together we can do this.

Keep the chrome side up and the rubber side down.

— Learned that two posts had donated \$5,000 each to the Centennial Convention Corp. for use during the upcoming 100th annual convention to be held Minneapolis in 2018.

— Heard Tesdahl give a report on the PCI fund raising effort. The Texas company is producing a book on Legion members that cost \$99. They are also gathering information for the Minnesota Legion. He said they have collected nearly 7,000 new email addresses for the state, and have updated over 10,000 phone records. They have so far earned about \$9,000 as the Legion's share of the book profits.

— Was told by Pat Logan, chairman of the Department's Convention Corporation, that a site is still be sought for the 2018 Fall Conference. He said planning for this year's convention at Mahnomen is moving along, and that both the Auxiliary and the Legion will meet in the same building. Room rates will be \$85.

— Heard from Tesdahl on the National Convention to be held this year in Reno. Minnesota will be housed in the Peppermill Resort Hotel. He said the complex, which is located about a mile from the convention center, has 10 restaurants under its roof. He said there would be shuttle service to the convention, and that parking was free. He said there were two wedding chapels in the complex.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By Ron Quade, Director
American Legion/ MDVA
Claims Division



"Give us our mail back"

Your American Legion Claims Divisions are at the cutting edge of advocacy at a local, state, federal and National level. In previous segments you learned about MDVA (Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs) and American Legion Claims Division in Minnesota. This month you will learn about changes in VA communication and the impact a lack of information has in the process of VA claims.

Approximately five years ago MDVA received first indications of major changes in VA procedures and communications. The changes in business process and communications is called, "VA Transformation." VA proclaimed in 2012 VA Transformation would bring improvements in business processing and communication including the following goals and objectives; Eliminate backlog, increase access to benefits, end homelessness, make claims easier, increase outreach and build internal capabilities. VA Transformation would be accomplished by utilization and modification of three primary resources, People or VA employees, processing which means the manner in which communication was sent and received and technology which means virtualizing all VA information and using a new information system. Claims files and VA cases would be managed by a VA information system called Veteran Benefits Management System (VBMS).

MDVA began communication with both local VA Regional Office leadership and National Advocates. Our concern is being in any way excluded from communications, information or any part of the claims process. Part of the VA transformation was the virtualization of information and the creation of a nationwide work queue (NWQ) for VA decision makers. Both changes created a situation where advocates, your AL Claims Division Staff, were allowed limited access to information and notification of action on claims was illuminated. With paper files your Advocate would receive a copy of VA actions, letters and decisions. With VA changes, your advocate lost their daily mail.

We are proud to announce with the assistance from our State American Legion DSO, Mr. Wolfsteller and our National American Legion partners, specifically Mr. Hearn, an important message of advocacy inclusion and communication has been broadcast in several ways. Recently the American Legion was invited and testified to the House Committee on Veteran Affairs, (Please see hearing online) in which the message, "Give the Advocates Our Mail Back" was delivered loud and clear. MDVA and AL will continue to work hard to ensure VA includes us in the claims process, gives us clear communication and information on claims action to the original jurisdiction and implements a cooperative claims process seeing Advocates as a resource and benefit in the claims process. You can count on updates in this process in future articles.

Please contact your local County Veteran Service Office or contact the AL Claims Division directly at 612 970 5662. I look forward to bringing you more information about the Claims Divisions who are on the ground working hard for you every day.

Baseball call-ins announced

Mike Gort of Marshall and Dave Kunz of Gilbert, both members of the state Baseball Committee, have been asked to work national tournaments. Gort will be tournament director in the Northeast Region, and Kunz will be assistant director in the Great Lakes region

Membership Chart

As of Feb. 22, 2017

District	2017 Goal	Total 2016	Total 2017	Percent of Goal	Same Date '16
1	9,380	9,322	8,495	90.57	8,972
2	7,572	7,488	7,021	92.71	7,241
3	11,977	11,912	11,162	93.20	11,548
4	2,592	2,572	2,257	87.08	2,394
5	2,679	2,657	2,306	86.08	2,536
6	12,109	12,038	11,254	92.94	11,573
7	6,695	6,619	6,093	91.01	6,418
8	4,417	4,377	4,021	91.03	4,158
9	7,015	6,950	6,381	90.96	6,716
10	10,611	10,557	9,533	89.84	10,170
At-large	1,953	2,710	2,238	114.59	2,559
Totals	77,000	77,202	70,761	91.90	74,285

StarTribune reports on Legion success story

The following is reprinted with permission of the StarTribune Co. The story, along with photos, can be accessed by going to startribune.com and searching for "Eagan American Legion."

By Erin Adler

When John Flynn unexpectedly became the new commander of the struggling Eagan American Legion last spring, he said he began recruiting new members by phone with a standard — and humble — speech.

"I'm the new commander of the Eagan American Legion," Flynn would begin. "I'm sure you're probably not even aware we exist."

The calls paid off, he said, estimating that about nine out of 10 veterans he contacted joined the Eagan Legion.

It's just one sign of Post 594's renaissance. Through Flynn's efforts, including dozens of calls, door-to-door visits to local businesses and more frequent meetings at a new location, Post 594 has gone from a 77-member group on the verge of folding to an ambitious service organization with 167 veterans.

His post had the largest growth rate in Minnesota in the past year, according to Rolanda Herron, the American Legion's assistant membership director.

"I couldn't allow Eagan or the veterans to not have an opportunity to do something for the community," Flynn said. "That's how I felt — somebody's got to take ownership here."

The Eagan post started in 1989 but had become inactive, he said, with just two or three people attending meetings, held twice annually. Flynn increased the membership without the visibility and fundraising resources provided by a typical American Legion bar-and-restaurant set up.

Flynn and the post's adjutant, Wayne Beierman — both Vietnam War-era veterans — have led members on a number of community service projects and have more in the works.

"We don't believe in the beer, brats, and those types of things, [though] we certainly like to have a beer once in a while," Beierman said. "I want us doing outreach in the community and helping other veterans."

Membership in the American Legion has decreased nationally over the past few decades as the total number of veterans has fallen.

"Unless our market penetration increases dramatically, we're going to get a smaller organization," said Randy Tesdahl, state adjutant for the Minnesota American Legion.

The Legion has a program to revitalize posts that need help. Other times, a leader steps in and breathes life into a stagnant post.

"We're always looking for that one veteran that can be that spark," Tesdahl said.

In Eagan, Flynn took on that role. After being active in the American Legion in California and Connecticut, he was a member of Minnesota's at-large American Legion for more than 15 years. Just over a year ago, he got a phone call asking him to join Post 594 in Eagan. He had no idea it existed, he said.

Things had been quiet at the post for a while. The commander had tried to shut down and merge with the Rosemount post in 2015, Flynn said, but state leaders wouldn't allow it.

Spurred on by the call and a mailing, Flynn attended an

Eagan meeting last spring and walked out as the post's new commander. After having coffee with several members, he figured out areas that needed improvement.

"The first thing I realized when I took this responsibility was, we have no presence," Flynn said.

There were communication issues, along with a bank balance of just \$263. Flynn, who is semi-retired, began calling local members of the statewide American Legion and asking them to join the Eagan post instead.

The calls drew about 70 new members from the Vietnam War-era along with five new Korean War veterans, one World War II veteran, about 15 new recruits from the Lebanon and Grenada conflicts and 18 new members from the Persian Gulf wars and other Mideast conflicts. Those numbers include members who have signed up but not paid, Flynn said.

Flynn also met with city leaders and visited local businesses — gas stations, restaurants, and a Tires Plus — to share information and drop off brochures. His efforts took 70 hours a week last summer and fall, he said.

Because the post doesn't have a commercial office, Flynn decided to gather the members every two months at a bowling alley.

"I didn't want to go to a bar because I was afraid our mission would turn into tequila sunrises," Flynn said.

Not having the responsibility of running a bar and restaurant can actually benefit some posts, Tesdahl said, adding it's not unusual for posts to be without a home base.

The three meetings so far have been well-attended and members have organized a number of service activities, including distributing 100 flag etiquette books to first-graders, packing food for the food shelf and raising money to sponsor the Eagan American Legion youth baseball team. They've also started programs to supply new flags to the community and properly dispose of tattered ones.

Plans include recognizing high school seniors who enlist in the military and developing a color guard to represent Eagan.

Paul Kovach, an Eagan High School teacher who served in the Marine Corps Reserves from 1983 to 1989, is the latest recruit. Kovach didn't know he was eligible to join, he said, and "just thought it was just a bunch of old guys" anyway. Now he's excited to assist veterans, he said, and credits Flynn with signing him up.

"He's persuasive," Kovach said. "You can't help but want to help out."



READY, SET, BOWL -- Bowlers get ready for the start of the 2017 State Legion Bowling Tournament at Sundance Lanes in Dayton.



BOWLING BEGINS -- Commander Denise Milton, with Bowling Secretary John Torma, threw out the first ball at the state tournament in Dayton.

Commander's Tour

Continued from Page 1

Schmidt told those at West Duluth, "With every membership card comes a voice and a vote. It's our turn to carry on the legacy." One of the guests at West Duluth was Past National President Evelyn Starr.

It was 11 below zero at breakfast in McGregor, and the national commander noted, "There's a lot of fresh air in Minnesota."

Schmidt said the Legion has been doing good for America for a long time. "Somebody way before you and I laid the groundwork for what we do today."

At Pine City he reiterated that it was important for individuals to participate. "Do a couple of things, come to a meeting, get involved."

An Awareness Walk was planned at Elk River in the afternoon, but the contuning sub-zero weather forced the march inside. Commander Milton led a contingent of yellow t-shirt clad Legion Family members around the post.

Schmidt said that his introduction to the Legion was when his brother paid his dues for the first two years when he was still in the military. "Big brother did me a big favor."

Past National Commander Dan Ludwig of Red Wing was on hand for the Elk River stop.

At Buffalo on the fourth and final day, he greeted Department President Carol Kottom in her home unit. "The Auxiliary has never walked behind us, they have always walked beside us," he said.

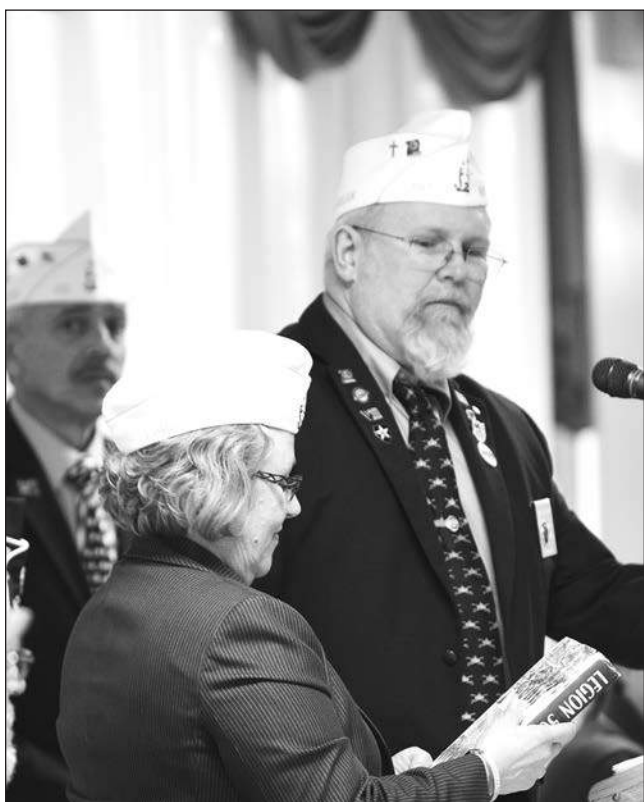
At both Buffalo and Richfield, Schmidt also had question and answer periods where he addressed such topics as member eligibility and VA benefits.

"The First World War did a lot of harm both physically and mentally to our doughboys. We've been helping veterans ever since. That's what we do."

The tour concluded with a dinner meeting at Mound. He turned to Milton and said that the minute Minnesota makes membership goal this year, she should call him. "I'll be waiting for that call from Denise, and I know I'm going to get it."

The driver for the five days was Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl. National Commander's Aide Dirk Levy was also part of the entourage.

The first two stops on the planned tour, in East Grand Forks and Thief River Falls, had to be canceled when the national commander was called to a meeting in Texas.



Department Historian Ralph Schneekloth presented Department Commander Denise Milton with a copy of the *Legion 50* book by Ben Gimmestad. He said the upcoming Centennial will be a reason for posts to look at their history.

Rally at New Prague Post



Department Adjutant Randy Tesdahl auctioned off fishing gear to raise money for the commander's project.

The top districts for the Sweetheart Rally included: Legion, Sixth District, 91.13 percent; Auxiliary, Sixth District, 85.55 percent; SAL, Fifth District, 107.24.

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Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., talked over veterans issues with a Minnesota delegation in his office in Washington D.C. He announced that he would co-sponsor a bill that would have the U.S. Mint create a gold coin for The American Legion for its centennial. Past Department Commander Bill Goede is at right.



The Minnesota American Legion presented Walz with a plaque honoring his commitment to promoting legislation that benefits veterans.

Washington Conference

Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, welcomed The American Legion to Washington D.C. by saying, "You have come here to do the work of God in the city of Satan."

After his speech, McCain received a national award from the Legion for his work on veterans' issues through the years.

"Veterans need The American Legion today more than at any other time," McCain told the "Know before You Go," session at the Washington Hilton, held just before the delegations from various states headed to Capitol Hill to lobby their elected representatives.

A group of about 35 from Minnesota met with every representative and senator, or their aide, and presented a list of veterans issues the Legion considers important. (See the list on page 9.)

McCain cited a "breakdown in the world order and an attack on the founding principles of democracy" as a major test in America's resolve.

He noted that the Veterans Choice bill, which allows veterans to seek care outside the VA system in certain circumstances, has been controversial, but it is still needed. The bill expires this summer.

"We want our veterans to have immediate care. No one should be on a waiting list for days, weeks or months."

New VA Secretary David Shulkin also talked about Veterans Choice, and said it needs to be extended, but also changed. "Choice needs to be streamlined. It's too complicated. I think it's time for Choice 2.0, a program that's not based on mileage or wait times."

Shulkin told the Legion Family at the session that VA facilities are aging, and money is needed to keep them up to modern standards.

He said the VA in general needed streamlining. "We've had enough studies and commissions. We need to get on this task and do it quickly."

The VA system is unique, he said, and it must remain in place because no other medical system has the expertise to deal with the special needs of veterans, particularly PTSD and traumatic brain injury.

Shulkin said the best practices of private providers and the best practices of the VA need to be combined to "do what is best for veterans."

The session started with a talk by National Commander Charles Schmidt who urged Congress to pass a flag protection amendment this year. "People have told me we should quit bothering Congress with this request. I say, pass the bill, and we'll quit bothering you."

Schmidt was followed by Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tennessee, the chairman of the House Veterans Committee. He said he thought the VA has enough resources, but needed to do a better job of managing those resources.

Roe said the VA needed legislation to make it easier to fire bad employees. "If some of these employees did that kind of work in the private sector, the door would hit them on the backside on their way out."

Roe, who is a doctor, said that patients must be in charge of their care. "The patient and not the insurance company must make the decisions. In the VA we have the best health care provided by anyone in the world."

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Montana, who serves on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, also said that Veterans Choice needed to be extended, but improved.

"The third party companies that administer the program need to shape up or ship out."

Tester also said he favors legislation that will give the VA more power to weed out bad employees. "We need the ability to act quickly and to show them the door."

Tester urged better care for women veterans. "Women have unique barriers to care. We must improve their privacy and their access to private care."

He said the VA needs more funding. "I'm sick and tired of Congress shaking its fist at the VA without giving them the resources they need."



Past National Commanders Dan Dellinger, Virginia, Dan Ludwig, Minnesota, and Jake Comer, Massachusetts, take in the "Know before You Go" session at the Washington Conference.



A group of Minnesota Legion and Auxiliary members met with Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., at her office in the Hart Building. From left are Marland Ronning, Minnesota's National Executive Committeeman; Auxiliary President Carol Kottom, Department Commander Denise Milton, Legislative Assistant Lindsey Kerr, and Sen. Klobuchar.



Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, received a Distinguished Service Award from The American Legion for his lifetime achievement in the military, in Congress and as a supporter of veterans rights. It was presented in Washington by National Commander Charles Schmidt.



Members of the Minnesota Auxiliary prepare for going up on the Hill. From left: Shirley Frederick, Rayleen Tolzmann, Sharon Thiemecke, Jean Walker and Margee Keller.



Newly appointed VA Secretary David Shulkin outlined his plans for the agency.



Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tennessee, Chairman of the House Veterans Committee, spoke to the Legionnaires.



Sen. Jon Tester, D-Montana, spoke at the Washington Conference. He serves on the veterans committee.



Bill Barbknecht, second from right, who is Minnesota's representative on the Selective Service board, posed with National Director Adam Copp at the annual ANIVICUS breakfast. On the left are ANAVETS President Rev'd Canon Tom McKnight and ANAVICUS Vice President Dan Ludwig.

Legion priorities for federal legislation

Gender-specific care for women

Women veterans face remarkably different experiences than their male counterparts when transitioning in and out of combat roles, in between services and back to civilian life. VA must ensure an improved quality of life for women veterans with gender-specific health care

Reclassify cannabis for research

Studies show great promise that medical cannabis is a viable solution for treating pain, inflammation, seizures, mental health disorders, autoimmune diseases, multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, Alzheimer's disease and even cancer.

Support caregivers

There are 5.5 million caregivers who go unnoticed while they care for America's wounded. Military caregivers suffer higher rates of depression and health problems than others.

Mandatory reservist exams

Active-duty servicemembers have the right to physical examinations when separating. After all, servicemembers retiring from active duty are required to have such examinations. This same right to an end-of-service exam is not authorized for reserve component servicemembers.

Veterans and widows offsets

Many military retirees must forfeit some of their retirement pay to receive their VA service-connected disability compensations. It is equally outrageous that VA survivor benefits (DIC) are offset from military Survivor Benefit Plan annuities.

Fully fund national defense

Today's war on terrorism continues to overcome threats to America's security and national interests at home and abroad. It is critical to maintain a well-funded national security strategy to ensure a strong national defense to protect America and its allies from enemies such as the Islamic State, China and North Korea.

Limit VA Outsourcing

Continued focus is needed to ensure VA can meet challenges in delivering high-quality, timely benefits and health care to veterans. In 2017, critical policy choices must be made, primarily the future of the Veterans Choice Program, which expires in August.

Reform VA claims appeals process

The current VA appeals process is broken and is providing a frustrating experience for veterans. The status quo isn't acceptable. Congress must pass appeals modernization legislation that would provide veterans with a simple, fair and transparent appeals process in which the vast majority would receive a final appeals decision within a year of filing an appeal.

Defend veterans education benefits

As the creator of the original GI Bill, The American Legion continues to focus on the sustainability of this important earned benefit, while ensuring that veterans receive the most benefit possible.

Re-employment rights

Passed by Congress in 1994, the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act protects the rights of servicemembers to be re-employed after returning from active duty, including reserve or National Guard members. The American Legion wants to prohibit employers from pressuring veterans into waiving their veterans employment rights and protections.

Support veteran small businesses

Businesses owned by disabled veterans are required to receive 3 percent of federal contracts.

Continue homelessness funding

To fully implement VA's pledge to eradicate veterans homelessness, Congress must continue making responsible investments in affordable housing and programs such as Supportive Services for Veterans Families that move veterans and their families off the streets and into stable housing.

Protect the American Flag

The American Legion strongly believes the flag is a symbol of our nation's freedom and all that we hold in common as Americans, secured by the servicemen and women who sacrificed so much for all citizens. That is why The American Legion continues to urge Congress to approve an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the American flag. Our belief is not to silence those who protest perceived injustices. The American Legion is not alone in its belief that our nation's symbol should be protected from desecration.



National Commander Charles Schmidt of Oregon greeted Bagley Post 16 member Peter Thompson. Thompson, a member of the Ojibway people, was awarded six Purple Hearts during his service in Vietnam.



An awareness walk planned for Elk River was canceled because of cold weather, but Commander Schmidt and Department Commander Denise Milton led an abbreviated walk through the post home.

National Commander's Tour



A teeshirt at Bagley made a statement.



Greeting the National Commander in Bena was a youth drum group from the Leech Lake Reservation.



Schmidt greeted Past National President Evelyn Starr during a stop at West Duluth Post 71.



Duluth Mayor Emily Larson talked over veterans issues with Eighth District Commander Ken Oliver and National Commander Charles Schmidt.