



Legionnaire

Volume 98, Number 3

For God and Country

March 2016

Rep. Walz featured speaker at DC rally

As they have several times before, the national American Legion employed Rep. Tim Walz to gear up the hundreds of delegates from across the nation who were in Washington D.C. to lobby their elected leaders.

Walz, a Minnesota Congressman from the First District, was a speaker at the "Know before you go" rally held during the Washington Conference. After the rally, Legionnaires from every state headed up the hill to visit with their congressmen.

Minnesota brought 35 delegates to the nation's Capitol and the group spoke to both senators, two congressmen, and aides from every other district.

"If one veteran falls through the cracks, then our job is not done," Walz told the rally at the Washington Hilton. "We will not settle for less."

Walz said the VA health system is often hamstrung by

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PNC Jimmie Foster to speak at Kellogg dinner

Past National Commander Jimmie Foster will be the keynote speaker at the testimonial dinner for Minnesota Department Commander Jim Kellogg.

The testimonial will be held at the Adams Post 146, the home post of the commander, on Saturday, April 9.

The social hour will be at 5 p.m. with dinner at 6 and the program at 7. Music will follow.

The meal will be a buffet-style all-you-can-eat fea-

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Look ma, no hands



National Commander Dale Barnett gives a thumbs up as he completes his snowmobile ride, the first of his life, just outside the Winona Post. Earlier in his tour of 12 Minnesota posts, he got a chance to walk on water and try his luck at ice fishing at the Forest Lake Post 225 (lower right). More photos on pages 6, 7, 10, 11.

Barnett has quite a ride through Minnesota

By Al Zdon

National Commander Dale Barnett of Georgia had quite a time during his five days in Minnesota.

He walked on water for the first time.

He took his first ride on a snowmobile.

And he met with 900 Legionnaires and guests, was interviewed by 23 members of the press, and traveled nearly 1,000 miles while visiting 12 posts, one veterans' cemetery and Herman the German.

Barnett has been traveling the country doing "awareness walks" in various states, trying to raise the public's awareness of the Legion's presence.

His walk in Minnesota, his 18th so far, was slightly different. He marched out of the Forest Lake Post 225 accompanied by about 40 Legionnaires, Auxiliary and others, and walked straight out on the ice.

A couple of blocks out on the frozen lake, Barnett got to drill his own hole and try his hand at fishing. Despite some expert advice from Past National Commander Dan Ludwig of Red Wing, Barnett was unable to reel one in. Mark Reinsberg, SAL finance officer, set up the fishing venue.

Later, Minnesota Department Commander Jim Kellogg commented, "The national commander not only walked on water, but when that ice was cracking beneath his feet, I think I heard him talking to God also."

The bookend of the fishing adventure at the first stop was a snowmobile

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Dates changed for state convention

The dates for this summer's Department Convention have been changed to one week later.

The convention will be held in Rochester on July 20-23 and not a week earlier as has been announced.

Housing and registration details will be in the April Legionnaire.

Minneapolis youth wins state oratorical

Isaac Winnes, a home-schooled senior from Minneapolis, won the 2016 Minnesota American Legion Oratorical contest.

Winnes, who finished second in last year's state contest, will represent Minnesota in the National Oratorical Contest to be held in Indianapolis on April 16-17.

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ISAAC WINNES

Screaming over the jungle treetops at 320 MPH

Pages 12-14



NATIONAL OFFICERS -- There was a gathering of Legion leadership at Princeton during the National Commander's Tour of Minnesota. From left, National Sergeant-at-Arms Dan Zimmermann, who lives in Georgia but hails from New Ulm; National Executive Committeeman Marland Ronning, Maple Grove; National Commander Dale Barnett of Georgia; National Vice Commander Al Davis who lives in Princeton. More National Commander's Tour pictures are on pages 6-7 and 10-11.

National Commander's Tour

Continued from Page 1

ride at the last stop, three days later, at Winona Post 9. American Legion Rider Kevin Barr of Rushford brought his snow machine to the post home, and Barnett – in borrowed hat, gloves and coat – gamely took it for a nighttime spin in the park across the street.

In between, the national commander visited Princeton Post 216, Little Falls Post 46, Morris Post 29, Litchfield Post 104, Delano Post 377, Hutchinson Post 96, Wells Post 210, Adams Post 146, Stewartville Post 164 and Preston Post 166.

His talk varied from stop to stop, but Barnett often mentioned that he will be testifying before Congress in late February.

"We want to hold the VA accountable. We are trying to stand up for veterans and not promote ourselves. They fear us because we tell the truth."

Barnett also described his efforts to hold the VA accountable for two senior executives who had themselves transferred – one to St. Paul – and cost the taxpayers over \$400,000 in relocation expenses as part of the deal.

"We are not against the VA, but we are against waste, fraud and abuse."

Congress called a hearing on the relocation, but the VA people, including the two executives and their boss, did not show up. The committee held a vote, with the motion made by a Democrat and seconded by a Republican, to subpoena the witnesses.

"If there's one organization that can bring America together," Barnett said. "It's The American Legion. There is great power in this organization."

The two were finally relocated again, and demoted, but the demotions were reversed in an appeals process. Their boss quit rather than face the Congressional hearing. Barnett said he will continue to seek accountability in the VA.

"You can't change the world, but you can work as hard as you can to try."

Barnett mentioned several times that Minnesota was in the top five in the nation in seeking its membership goal. He reminded listeners that he was a high school football coach in Georgia.

"You'll never hear a coach say, 'We're up now, let's quit.' No, it doesn't mean anything if you don't finish the game. Don't quit on me now."

Commander Kellogg had the same message. "As an old farmer, I say, 'Don't take the plow out of the ground now, we've got to finish the row.'"

Barnett, who is a former Boys Stater and is on the Boys Nation staff, pointed out at several stops how Legion programs again and again help the youth of America.

"That's what we do in The American Legion, we help young people. People say we're a dying organization, but nothing could be further from the truth. We're a growing organization because our organization has value."

Along the way, Barnett honored several World War II vets, and at Stewartville talked with a group of Korean vets from Rochester. He also had special praise for the Vietnam veterans.

"You changed the way that America looks at veterans and their families. You could have been angry, but instead you changed America."

Barnett made the trip without his aide Dewey Moss, but he was accompanied by two stand-ins, Bob Proctor of

Georgia and Dan Zimmermann of Georgia. Zimmermann is the National Sergeant-at-Arms and grew up in New Ulm.

The caravan took a short side trip to New Ulm to see the statue of Herman the German and also learn some New Ulm history at the city's library.

The tour also made a stop at the brand new Minnesota Veterans Cemetery at Preston. The commander was impressed with the scenic setting of the cemetery in the hilly country along the Root River. The facility will be dedicated in May.

Barnett hopped on a plane in Minneapolis and headed for his next stop in New Mexico.

Foster to speak at Kellogg Testimonial

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turing steak and chicken. Cost is \$15 per person.

Music will follow the program.

RSVPs should be mailed to Adams American Legion Post 146, Attention: Commander, 321 West Main Street, Adams, MN 55909. RSVPs are due at the post by April 1.

No rooms have been reserved at local hotels, but the AmericInn and the Holiday Inn in Austin have rooms available.

Foster served as National Commander from 2010-11. At that time his home was Anchorage, Alaska.

He was born and raised in Oklahoma and graduated with a degree in Agriculture Education at Northeastern A&M College in Oklahoma.

Foster served in the Marine Corps and served at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego during the mid-70s.

After he left the Marines, he joined the Army and completed 20 years of military service in 1994 as a chief legal noncommissioned officer.

He held many offices in Alaska, and served as Department Commander in 1999-2000.

Nationally, he served as a National Executive Committeeman and on several national commissions. He chaired the National Legislative Commission.

He and his wife, Rehta, have two sons and five grandchildren. Rehta was Department President of the Auxiliary in Alaska.

In recent times, Foster has been adjutant in Oklahoma, and he now serves as Department adjutant in Kansas.

Commander Kellogg was elected Department Commander this past July during the state convention in Redwood Falls. Kellogg is a farmer who lives near Taopi, Minnesota.

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Washington Conference

Continued from Page 1

not being able to remove poor or dishonest workers. "They tell me that we can't fire our way to a good VA. Maybe not, but we can fire incompetent people." He said the current policies make it nearly impossible to weed out the poor employees.

The Minnesota representative also spoke about keeping the strength of the nation intact through a strong military. He said recent cuts make it look as if national leaders are wishing we had a good military.

"But wishing is not a plan. There can be no middle ground on the defense of this nation."

We must also support our military by making sure their benefits and salary are up to par. "We have to keep faith with those who are most deeply committed to America. Everytime we tweak the benefits of our warriors, we tell them we don't believe in them."

Walz lauded The American Legion not only for standing up to the VA and Congress, but for the many programs it provides to the community. "Boys State and Girls State are absolutely critical in developing future leaders. And then there's baseball. These programs are part of the very fabric of our community. This is the continuity of America."

He encouraged the Legion to stay strong. "If you're not here, who will do these things? They say I'm preaching to the choir, but the choir needs to sing loudly."

The ralliers got two separate opinions of the condition of the VA, one from National Commander Dale Barnett and another from VA Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson.

Barnett said the VA provides outstanding care, and that staff is high dedicated, but that reports continue to show some bad leadership. "Corrupt, incompetent behavior should never be tolerated."

Barnett later told a congressional hearing, "Congress, VA, the DoD and veterans service organizations must show those who have served in uniform that America can be as accountable to its veterans as veterans have been to America."

Barnett cited the case of two employees who used relocation bonuses to accumulate more than \$400,000 in taxpayer money for themselves. The two were demoted, but an appeals process restored them to their former rank.

"VA executives, managers and employees who fail to perform in a responsible or competent manner – or, worse yet, abuse their positions for personal gain – should be appropriately disciplined, to include termination. The American Legion, Congress and VA all supported the Accountability Act because it made clear that dereliction of duty would have consequences.

"The words are all there. Execution is the problem."

Gibson painted a picture of the VA as an organization that has been getting better in recent years. He pointed to some statistics including the hiring of 1,400 new doctors and 4,000 nurses in the last two years.

He said waiting lists were shorter, and the Veterans Crisis Line has handled over a half million calls in the last year, and more trained operators have been hired. He also said that more and more veterans are now in homes and are off the streets.

"And we're not just getting vets off the street, we are helping them meet their needs."

Gibson also addressed the demotions of the two relocated employees that was overturned by the Merit Systems Protection Board. He said that the judge had sustained the charge, but said the punishment was unreasonable.

"I don't believe that kind of overturning of the discipline is consistent with congressional intent. That puts us in an extraordinarily difficult position when we have senior executives that have committed misconduct, the charges have been sustained, and they've been returned."

The rally also heard from Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Georgia, who said that VA Secretary Bob McDonald has gotten a bad rap.

"Nobody is trying harder to fix the VA."



ORATORICAL FINALISTS -- District candidates from across Minnesota gathered in Osseo, Coon Rapids and Anoka for the semi-finals and state finals in the Minnesota Oratorical Contest. From left: Monica Timmerman, Marshall; Auroura Eckberg, Detroit Lakes; Elise Sopelle, Pequot Lakes; Isaac Winnes, Minneapolis; Erica Sundvall, Cambridge; Ricky Erpelding, Kasson; Kelli Frederickson, Forest Lake; Elysia Morris, Deer River. Winnes won the contest and will represent Minnesota at the national contest in April.

Minneapolis senior wins Oratorical Contest

Continued from Page 1

"I'm really looking forward to the national contest," Winnes said. "I know it will be a lot of work, and I know the bar of competition will be raised pretty high."

Winnes, 17, is the son of Lynnae and Donald Winnes and lives in south Minneapolis. His prepared oration at the state contest was on the duties of citizens according to the constitution.

In his speech, he said, "Many people in our country today fail to grasp that at the root of being an American... is a choice. United States citizenship carries a tremendous amount of responsibility."

It's a responsibility, he said, that not all people take seriously. "Yet not everyone chooses to fulfill these responsibilities. While many people are born Americans, not every person who is born in this country makes the decision to be an American."

"What is fundamental to preserving our nation is recognizing our role in our nation. When we get frustrated with the course of our government, we so easily point fingers at Washington, but fail to realize that it is 'We the People' who hold the final authority. And 'We the People' are ultimately responsible for guiding the government's path."

He has an older brother and a younger sister, and he enjoys reading, hiking, spending time with friends, and following politics. "I like being informed about what's going on."

He has played high school soccer for Metro United home school league in Richfield. He attends Jubilee Community Church in Minneapolis.

Winnes is considering a career in business or political

science. He recently did an internship in a business setting, and at this time he is interning with a senator in the Minnesota Legislature during the 2016 session.

He is considering the University of Minnesota or Patrick Henry College in Virginia.

He has been active in a speech league for home schoolers, and he paid tribute to his speech coach, Marti Ackland. "I really enjoyed the contest last year, and I thought I'd try it again this year."

Winnes was sponsored by Wold-Chamberlin Post 99, and he represented the Fifth District.

The second place winner was Auroura Eckberg of Rochert, sponsored by Detroit Lakes Post 15 and the Ninth District. She is a senior at Detroit Lakes High School.

Third place was Elise Sopelle, a ninth grade home-schooler from Pequot Lakes. She was sponsored by Nisswa Post 627 and the Sixth District. In fourth place was Monica Timmerman of Marshall and a senior at Marshall High School. She was sponsored by Marshall Post 113 and the Seventh District.

The four finalist were determined during the preliminary rounds at Osseo Post 172 and Coon Rapids Post 334. The afternoon finals were held at Anoka Post 102.

Other contestants were Richard Erpelding, Kasson, First District, sponsored by Kasson Post 333; Adam Hruba, Lake Crystal, Second District, sponsored by Lake Crystal Post 294; Kelli Frederickson, Scandia, Third District, sponsored by Forest Lake Post 225; Elysia Morris, Deer River, Eighth District, sponsored by Deer River Post 122; and Erica Sundvall, Stanchfield, Tenth District, sponsored by Cambridge Post 290.

The Fourth District did not have a contestant.

State Legion Bowling Tourney underway



STILL OPENINGS IN TOURNEY -- Tournament Director John Torma and Auxiliary President Sandy Fredrickson gave opening remarks as the 2016 bowling tournament got going at Albert Lea. Torma said there are still quite a few openings for teams in the tourney, which goes until the middle of April. Teams can come from Legion, Auxiliary or SAL. For more information or to register, contact Torma at 612-749-3704 or email: johntorma1@aol.com.



FIRST BALL -- Minnesota Auxiliary President Sandy Fredrickson throws out the first ball of the 2016 Minnesota American Legion Bowling Tournament held at Albert Lea.



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COMMANDER'S COLUMN

By Jim Kellogg



Hello Minnesota Legionnaires. Well, our National Commander's tour is now history. We visited 12 post homes, traveled 1,000 miles and met with 900-plus Legion Family members. Thanks to all of you who made the effort to come to these events and the great hospitality shown us. The National Commander was impressed with the number of posts represented at each stop. I am sure he will always remember his visit to the Gopher State. Commander Barnett can now truly say he has walked on water and driven a snowmobile.

I also want to thank all who made our chili cookoff and ice fishing Sweeheart Rally a success. This was our first Winter Department event at Legionville. We can all be proud of our new facility and it is my hope that we are able to use it more in the future. Our last combined Department Rally will soon be there. It is my hope that many of you can attend. We take time each year to acknowledge the outstanding service of our District Vice Commanders. These members are our personal contact with each post in our Department and relay your concerns to help us provide better leadership for you our Members. Please use these District Vice Commanders as your voice for any concerns you may have. Together we can make our Department one of the best in our entire organization.

We have begun another Legion membership year. We are off to a great start. We need to continue our membership

drive. The last ten percent often need personal contact. Our membership numbers make our voice to our legislators more significant. The candidates now seeking office have started their campaigns. Now is the time to become involved in the process. Make your voice heard through your local caucus. Keep these candidates accountable for our veterans issues. As we farmers say, it is time to separate the grain from the fodder. We are the voice for our veterans and must maintain a strong presence or we will be forgotten. Our veterans look to The American Legion for support. We must not let them down. Maintaining a strong membership is key to our success. Please help keep us strong by asking your neighbor to renew their membership or become a new member. Together we can make it happen.

How many of you know CPR? Thanks to all of you who have taken the time to learn this life saving technique. In Legion terms CPR also stands for Consolidated Post Report. It is that time of year to once again put this all important report together. This report shows what each post has done the past year to put life into their local communities. Every member has done something this past year to help by being a member. We need each and every post to report their activities to our Department and to their membership and local communities. We need to tell our story so all can see and hear what we do to make our country a better place to live. Please report your individual activities to your post commanders so they can assemble the information and pass it on to our Department and National Headquarters. When you have it all put together put an article in your local newspaper and tell our story. Thanks for you help.

Our last Department Rally, which will be held in April, will be different this year. We are asking each Department Vice Commander to hold an event in their area. The events will be centered around a Minnesota Veterans Home. Membership will be turned in as usual. The remainder of the time will be spent visiting with the residents. This is something we all should take time to do and listen to their story. I hope many of you are able to attend these events. It will make for a special start to Spring.

May you all have a happy Easter, safe travels, and may God bless.

Legion Legacy Scholarship". Facts about the last six years of the MN Legacy Run: We rode for 34 days, visited 178 American Legion Post Homes, and raised over \$340,000.00, plus we visited all MN VA Homes, 5 Ball Fields, 4 Living Centers, plus some more. See you on the road, riding with a smile.

Mail Call

New Veterans Home

To the Editor:

I am sure that most Legionaries' and veterans as a whole support the 2016 Commander's Task Force goals. Why were not more Veterans Home added to the list? There are 144 beds still available for construction and over 1,500 veterans on the waiting list. Who knows how many more are eligible, but do not get on the waiting list due to its length. Montevideo and Bemidji both are actively pursuing 70 bed Veterans Homes. You just do not decide that you want a home in your area. There are numerous requirements to meet and both communities have met the criteria for homes. A couple of years ago I asked the Department Adjutant as to why the Department does not encourage our Legionnaires to actively contact our State Senators and Representatives in providing bonding funds for more Veteran Home construction. He told me that they first must get the funding for the Minneapolis Home. I can appreciate that, but that has now been accomplished. Now I ask the Department Leadership and all Legionnaires and veterans to actively engage their local State Senators and Representatives to support Senate File 89 and House File 1414 for the construction of these two homes. The Montevideo Area has raised \$5 Million toward the State share of \$11 Million. Our out-state Veterans need homes in their area also to allow for family to visit. I ask all veterans to contact their respective State Senators and Representative to support this legislation. God Bless America and God Bless our Veterans.

Marvin E. Garbe
American Legion Post 59
Montevideo

Cards for Troops

To the Editor:

To the Basswood Elementary School, Maple Grove, Students:

On behalf of the 80,000 veterans of The American Legion in the state of Minnesota and the additional veterans to whom we forwarded your very special Valentine's Day cards, we want to thank you for your support of our men and women in uniform.

Those that received your cards are serving on duty, away from their loved ones, and they are thankful to know that they have not been forgotten as they proudly stand watch protecting the freedom all Americans share.

Jim Kellogg

Chaplain's Corner

By
Richard Wog



When I wrote the last Chaplain's Corner I told the story of the four Chaplains. How they gave their life jackets to the soldiers that did not have any. Thinking not of themselves they did it for the love of their fellow man and their God. 1st Corinthians 13:13 says, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

I want to spend some time on the Military Chaplain Corps. As long as the military has existed, military Chaplains have served alongside soldiers providing for their spiritual needs. Working to improve morale and aiding the wounded. The Bible tells of the early Israelites bringing the priest with them. Pagan priests accompanied the Roman Legions during their conquest. As Christianity became predominant in the Roman Empire, Christian Chaplains ministered to Roman soldiers. In fact, the word Chaplain is derived from Cappa, the Latin word for cloak. The U.S. Army Chaplain Corp is one of the oldest and smallest branches of the army. The Chaplain Corps date back to 29 July 1775. No matter the branch of service the Chaplains of the active and reserve Corps are representing five major faith groups; Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslims and Buddhist, and over 120 denominations. We are just talking military. I think of all the other Chaplains who minister to others. I am so grateful for each of them. Also for the Chaplains of The American Legion. They do a wonderful job for us, the members.

As we move into March everyone knows this is the American Legion birthday: March 15-17, 1919. This great patriotic veteran's organization was formed focusing on service to veterans, service members and communities, taking care of war-weary veterans of World War I. As we move towards the 100 year birthday we must look back at what they wanted and as we move forward ensure the future of The American Legion.

We as a nation of free people have been given the freedom of the flag that lets us celebrate birthdays and other special events in our families and the country. Not so long ago it was the birth of Jesus. The happiness of his birth and what it meant to each of us. But now we are coming to another time of His life. A time of suffering. As Lent started it is a sad time for Christians because one knows the end of the story. The suffering Jesus had to endure. He knew what he was going to face and yet, he went. After His trial, He had to carry His own cross and endure the pain of being nailed to the cross. Each nail was 6 to 8 inches long. As one reads, it is hard to understand how anyone could do this to anyone else. Can you imagine this kind of suffering? From common images, we see wounds to His hands and feet and even a spear wound in His side. But before He was nailed to the cross Jesus was whipped and beaten. The crown of thorns on his head cut deeply into His scalp. Most men would not have survived this torture. All this while enduring great humiliation. He passed carrying his own cross for almost 2 kilometers while the crowd spat in His face and threw stones. Even through all of this Jesus said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Jesus had to endure this experience so that we can have free access to God. So that our sins could be "washed" away. All of them, no exceptions. Jesus Christ died for us.

May you and your families have a very blessed Easter.

The Minnesota Legionnaire

Official Publication of and Owned Exclusively by
The American Legion, Department of Minnesota

Al Zdon, Editor

First published in 1920 as the Hennepin County Legionnaire, the Minnesota Legionnaire is now in its 96th year of publication. It is published monthly by The American Legion, Department of Minnesota, Room 300A, 20 West 12th Street, St. Paul, MN 55155-2000. Periodicals postage is paid at St. Paul, MN, and at additional mailing offices. The Legionnaire is a member of the Minnesota Newspaper Association and the National American Legion Press Association.

SUBSCRIPTION: \$10 for non-members. Members receive the Legionnaire as part of their dues.

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The American Legion, 20 W. 12th Street, St. Paul, MN, 55155-2000. (USPS No. 013-679.) (ISSN No. 1644270)

ADVERTISING RATES: Contact Al Zdon, 651-291-1800

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What's Happening

Boys State Registration

Registration for Boy's State is now being accepted. Boys State will be held June 12-18 on the campus of Southwest State University at Marshall. Cost is \$300 per boy and posts can sponsor as many boys as they desire. Post representatives are encouraged to go to their local high school and get the process started. Last year's Boys Staters are also encouraged to promote the program in their high schools. Any questions, contact Jennifer Kelley at jkelly@mnlegion.org.

Visitor Restrictions

St. Cloud VA Hospital has implemented restrictions to its Community Living Center. The restrictions are aimed at preventing the spread of influenza-related illnesses. Visitors will be limited to immediate family members. Children will also not be allowed to visit.

Hastings Finance Session

There will be financial success seminar held at the Tilden Community Center in Hastings on Thursday, April 14, with a free light brunch at 6 p.m. and the program to follow at 6:30. Topics include financial banking services, establishing accounts, savings for college, retirement planning and saving money. For more information, contact Dean Markuson, 651-438-2208.

Outdoor Activities Planned

The disabled veterans turkey hunt and deer hunt, and the Trolling for Troops fishing outing are now accepting applications.

The Camp Ripley Turkey Hunt for Disabled Veterans will be held May 3-5. Applications will be accepted until April 1. Minnesota residents who are retired military members or have served in any branch since 2001 are eligible.

The 2016 Trolling for the Troops will be held June 2-3 on Lake Mille Lacs or the Mississippi River at Camp Ripley. It is open to all veterans and currently serving soldiers. The veteran and soldier will be paired with a pro fisherman in his boat for the outing. Applications are accepted from April 1 to May 1.

The 2016 Disabled Vets Deer Hunt will be held at Camp

Ripley on Oct. 4-5. It is open to retired veterans or those who have served since 2001 in any branch.

Contact www.minnesotanationalguard.org/surveys/camp-ripleyhunts.

Tri-City Bus

The New Brighton Tri-City Auxiliary 513 will have a bus going to Turtle Lake Casino on the first Thursday of every month. For more information, call Carol at 763-572-1312 or Jo at 763-786-6865.

Legal Clinics

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans is sponsoring a series of free drop-in legal clinics in Minnesota. The sessions will include housing, employment, benefits, debt collection, expungement, family law and child support.

Attorneys will be present. The clinics include:

-- Tuesday, March 22, St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Auditorium, Building 8, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

-- Wednesday, March 23, Litchfield VFW, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

-- Thursday, March 10, Anoka County Government Center, Anoka, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

-- Tuesday, March 8, Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Flag Atrium Balcony Room, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Lakeville Fund Raiser

Lakeville Post 44 will be having a fundraiser on Monday, March 14, at the Buffalo Wildwings restaurant on Orchard Trail in Lakeville. Anyone who mentions "We're here to support Lakeville Legion Post" will have 10 percent of their food bill donated to the post.

Military Ball

The 12th annual Military Ball will be held on Saturday, April 23, at the Fest Building in Spring Grove hosted by the Legion Family. Cocktails and photos begin at 4:30 p.m. with dinner at 5:45 followed by a program. Dancing will follow to the Cheers Big Band. The cost is \$27 per person and RSVPs are due by April 9. The Ball will be honoring Purple Heart recipients.

Veterans Town Hall

A Veterans Town Hall will be held at the Shakopee Post 2, 1266 First Ave. E., on Thursday, March 17 from 4-6 p.m. Leaders from the Minneapolis VA, the VBA Regional office and Fort Snelling National Cemetery will be on hand to hear your concerns.

St. Francis Fair

The St. Francis Post will host the Area Health and Wellness Fair on Saturday, April 30, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be education, screenings, mammograms, blood pressure checks and more.

Rosemount Pizza Fundraiser

The Rosemount Beyond the Yellow Ribbon will have an all-you-can-eat Pizza and Pasta Fundraiser on Monday, Mar. 21 from 5-8 p.m. at the Fireside Restaurant. Cost is \$10, and kids under 5 are free. Free soda.

Round Tables

The St. Croix Valley Civil War Roundtable will meet Monday, March 28. "Three Paths To Glory: The 2nd and 5th Minnesota and the First Tennessee" will feature speaker Dean Urdahl. It is a dinner meeting at the Lowell Inn in Stillwater. Contact Steve Anderson, 715-386-1268.

Fort Snelling WWII Round Table will have two programs. On March 10, Douglas Waller will present "From the OSS to CIA director." On March 24, Jim Eckles will present "Birth of the New Age of War -- Atomic Bombs and Rockets." The programs are at 7 p.m. with a \$5 fee and are held at the Fort Snelling History Center.

The Rochester Veteran's Roundtable will have "Americans in Vietnam, pre-WWII to 1975" with Tom Ostrom and Joe Connell. The program will be on Monday, March 14, at the Autumn Ridge Church at 7 p.m.

St. Francis Golf Tourney

The 10th annual Support the Troops Golf Tournament will be held at the Ponds Golf Course in St. Francis on Saturday, June 18. It will be a four-person scramble. Cost is \$95 per golfer and includes golf with cart, dinner and a gift bag. For information call Nancy Giesie, 763-795-6235.

Guest Editorial

Editor's Note: Paul Hassing gave this report at the 10th District Mid-Winter.

Younger Veterans

By Paul Hassing

Shortly after our Commander Bill Johnson was elected this last spring, he called me and told me that he had a special project for me. He wanted me to head an Ad Hoc Committee on Younger Veterans. The goal was to find out what they wanted out of a Veteran's Service Organization.

There were no guidelines. There were no restrictions. There was no set age to determine what a "Younger Veteran" was. Was it younger than World War II? Was it younger than me?

In the long run it didn't matter, as long as I could get some feedback on what people were looking for in an organization.

I started out with the grand notion that I was going to select a group of Veterans, and we could meet at different times throughout the year. They would give me their wonderful ideas on what The American Legion could do to improve. This was not the case. I soon realized that getting a group of young veterans to commit to a set time was like herding cats. Just trying to get the first meeting scheduled made me want to pull my hair out. (Those that know me are laughing.)

I had wanted a group of veterans that came from all aspects. From really young to middle aged, from career military, to one termers. I wanted males, and females. I wanted those with families, and those that still live with their parents. I wanted combat veterans, and those that served outside of a combat zone. I also wanted feedback from those that already belonged to a Veteran's Service Organization.

As I stated earlier, I was not successful in getting this vast group together at the same time, so I changed my methods. What I did was talk to them. At different times, at different places. Sometimes at work, sometimes out and about when I saw they were wearing something that made them look like military, and sometimes on drill weekends. I really liked speaking to the ones that I heard complaining about the VA, or the way veterans were being treated. Most thought the VA was a division of the Military, and that it was an entitlement for serving. They had never been told any different. In my opinion, these are the ones that should be joining The American Legion. If you don't want to fix the problem, you shouldn't complain about it.

I didn't have a set group of people, but I did have a set

of questions that I wanted them to answer. The main question I started with was: Are you a member of The American Legion, and if not, why not? The responses I got ranged from the usual "I don't have time" to "I can't afford it." Some of the responses I got were surprising.

Another question I asked was: What do you know about The American Legion? Some knew a little bit, but overwhelmingly they didn't know very much. Most thought of The American Legion as a bar on the corner that had fish fries every now and then to raise money.

They saw it as a place for old Veterans to sit around all day telling war stories, and arguing over who had it harder. What war was the worst, what branch had it the toughest, how today's military have it so easy. Even those who were members of The American Legion knew very little about it. Most of those I spoke to had been signed up by their parents as soon as they shipped off to basic training.

What I found in my questioning was that there is a big gap in information being handed down to the next generation. We are too quick to judge the younger veteran. We assume because they are not joining, that they don't have the same level of commitment that we do. This is not true; they just choose to be committed to different things.

I determined that it is true that the younger veterans are not chomping at the bit to join The American Legion. They are not that excited to join any Veteran's Service Organization. It is not because they don't have a sense of purpose, it is because the older veterans have done too good of a job. Too good of a job making things happen that the younger generation takes for granted. (If the neighbor is coming over to your house, and mowing your lawn once a week because he likes to mow lawns, you are going to let him). Where we need to be better is letting the younger ones know what it is we are doing, and getting the word out that these things will go away if the torch isn't passed. We need to let them know that we can't mow their lawn forever, and they need to start doing it themselves or the grass will get out of hand. Tell them about our programs, and let them know how long and hard we worked to get them.

We need to let them know, but we also need to change the way we think. The younger generation uses technology. If it's not on social media, it isn't happening. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. Social media, because the millennials like to do things in groups. If their friends are doing it, they want to do it. We need to let them know that we are the largest Veteran's Organization in the world.

They also like to be recognized when they do something

good. They like for their friends to know they did something. They like for their family to know, and be involved in what they are doing. I know it is different than what we are used to, but it is time we recognize what the Legion does, and those that do it. To the public, and to our own ranks.

The younger veterans do not carry cash. I don't know why, they just don't like to. They will not bat an eye over handing you their debit card for their membership dues, but ask them for a check, or cash, and they will look at you like you are from planet Neptune. Many times I spoke to someone interested, only to have them give me that look when I told them I couldn't take their card.

The younger veterans like to have a mission. The soldiers in my unit will bend over backwards for me if I ask them to. That is the key. It gets annoying, but I have to ask them. In their world, if you don't ask, you don't want. It is not wrong, it is just different than what most of us are used to. The number one reason for not belonging to The American Legion was that they had never been asked. A Soldier I spoke to at Fort Snelling told me that he has been active duty for 21 years, and nobody had ever asked him. 21 years in the military, and he thought The American Legion was a franchise bar where the proceeds went to veterans. He is now a member.

Once you have them with you, do not expect them to sit in the corner, and wait their turn. Again, this is not what we are used to, but it is the way it is. Give them something to do. Better yet, give them something to do where they can get their friends involved. Give them something that they can take pride in, and you will have them, and their friends for a long time. Put them and their friends in charge of new post activities. Have them talk to the Veterans Rep at the local college, and see what they can do to help.

In conclusion, the best way to get younger Veterans involved in The American Legion is the same way it has always been. Ask. We may have to ask a different way, and pay a different way, but in the end it still comes down to asking.

We all belong to a great organization and we need the public to know what we do, and how proud we are of The American Legion.

I would like to thank Commander Bill Johnson for this appointment, and thank you American Legion Family for listening.

Posts at Goal during the 2016 National Commander's Tour



HAYFIELD POST 330



MAPLE PLAIN POST 514



WAVERLY POST 305



APPLE VALLEY 1776



BROWNTON POST 143



SILVER LAKE POST 141



KINGSTON POST 483



HILLMAN POST 602



HOLDINGFORD POST 211



LONG PRAIRIE POST 12



RICHMOND POST 292



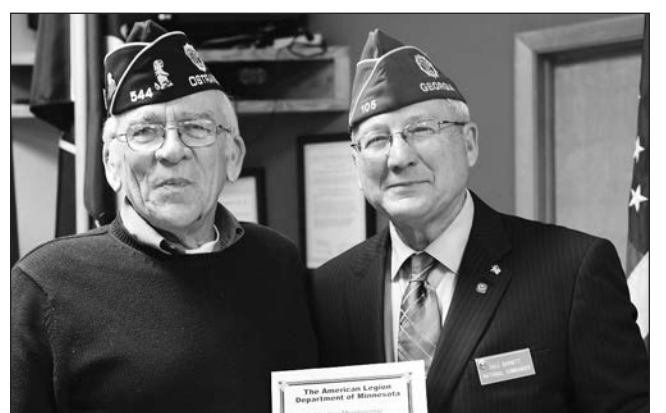
ST. JOSEPH POST 328



ZIMMERMAN POST 560



LANESBORO POST 40



OSTRANDER POST 544



BAGLEY POST 16



FRIDLEY POST 303



RUSH CITY POST 93

Posts at Goal during the 2016 National Commander's Tour



EYOTA POST 551



3M POST 599



BRICELYN POST 165



ROUND LAKE POST 461



WASECA POST 228



WELLS POST 210



PLAINVIEW POST 179



FOREST LAKE POST 225

Sons of The American Legion

By
Gene Olsword

Here we are in March already. However, as I sit here writing this article we are still in February, and believe it or not it is raining and very windy. So, did March "Come in as a Lion or a Lamb?" The answer next month.

Our National Minnesota Leaders of The American Legion Family, along with the other states National Leaders are descending on Washington DC for their annual Washington Conference. They will be meeting with Congress and a chance to meet with our elected officials to discuss legislative initiatives and priorities important to all our veterans whether they are Legion members or not. They are there in Washington working for us to let them know what we as Veterans need in benefits and our well being.

Why did I just write this last paragraph you ask? It is the strength of our membership in the American Legion Family that gives them the strength for Washington to listen to what they have to say. The more membership we have, the stronger is our voice to be heard. We are now in our 9th month of this year's membership with only 3 months to go. If you haven't renewed your membership for 2016, now is the time to get it done. Get with your squadron and renew it now.

If you have a new son or grandson, make them a member at the same time. Remember, I said strength above and every renewal and new member adds to that strength. National sent out renewal notices at the end of January for all those members that haven't yet renewed as a reminder to you.

Let's get you back on the paid rolls for 2016. If you have a friend or relative who was a son and has not renewed in the past, contact them and let's get them back on the active rolls also. An old recruiting poster shows Uncle Sam pointing his finger saying "I Need You". As your Detachment Commander, "I Need You".

Our normal renewal percentage is normally way over 85% and currently, as of February 19th, Minnesota is at 73.38%, so we have some work ahead of us. Just to let you know where we actually stand, from the same report date above, our National goal this membership year is 11,452 and we are currently at 9,204 new/renewed members or 80.37%. This is just awesome and I am very proud and happy to see this great figure. We are ahead of National's goal of 75% at this time.

My personal goal for Minnesota is 12,030 members this year and very attainable and I know we can do it. The Sons of The American Legion is STRONG in Minnesota so let's just show the world and this Nation just how strong we really are.

For more information on the Sons, I encourage you to check out our Detachment web sight at www.mnsal.org. There is much information available there and how we support all the programs of The American Legion.

Keep in your prayers all our Service Men and Service Women that stand in Harm's Way each and every day protecting Our Great Nation for their safe return home to their families.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

By
Jeremy Wolfsteller

The Evolution of Thinking

As we grow older sometimes our way of thinking changes. For some of us high school and college academics weren't very appealing when we were growing up. Rather the thought of joining the service and donning the uniform was more exciting. For those that served old glory, they came home with experience that was unmeasurable compared to their counterparts whom never served. With a new found appreciation for life, instilled with purpose, motivation and direction, veterans gain interest in learning and furthering their academic pursuit.

In Minnesota the opportunity for veterans to pursue post-secondary education is more reachable because of additional education benefit above and beyond federal GI Bill benefits. The great State of Minnesota, offers an education benefit called "The Minnesota GI Bill" which is funded through the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. If you are a resident of Minnesota, under the age of 62, have an honorable discharge, and are attending an institute of higher learning or in an approved apprenticeship/OJT program, you may be eligible for this benefit. If you are attending college, the benefit is administered through the financial aid office by completing a simple application. Veterans and eligible dependents can receive up to \$1,000 per semester, \$3,000 per academic year and \$10,000 over a life time, up to age 62. If you are in an approved apprenticeship or on-the-job training site, you can receive up to \$1000 for every six month in training, up to \$7000 maximum benefit. Employers also receive \$1000 for hiring Veterans and an additional \$1000 if the employee is retained for one year.

Now is the time to take advantage of this great benefit only for Minnesota veterans and eligible dependents. Don't worry if your GI Bill has expired or if you've utilized it all because the MN GI Bill is an additional education benefit to help cover tuition expenses after you use your federal education benefits.

For more information please contact the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs or your college financial aid office.



ROCKY WEDIN HONORED -- Longtime American Legion Baseball volunteer Rocky Wedin was honored with a 50-year certificate presented by Baseball Director Mike Perry at the Second District winter baseball meeting. Wedin has been a mainstay of the annual Division II Legion Tournament.



HIRE OUR HEROES -- A Hire our Heroes Job Fair was presented in St. Paul with over 150 employers and 400 veterans attending. The event was co-sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, The American Legion, API Group and the Minnesota Wild. Those attending got free Wild tickets. From left: Tom Dyer, API Group Inc.; Eric Eversole, Hire our Heroes; Craig Leopold, Minnesota Wild, Jim Kellogg, Department Commander.