

GOPHER OVERSEAS

Volume 72, NO. 1 Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Official Publication to More Than 45,000 Members of the Department of Minnesota February 2018 - May 2018

State Voice of Democracy Winner Takes 7th Place, \$5K at National



Logan Ledman, 11th Grade, sponsored by Eugene H. Traux VFW Post #9343, Northfield, M.N.

Minnesota student Logan Ledman was honored with 7th Place in the V.F.W. National Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition. He was awarded a \$5,000 scholarship.

The National winners were announced live at the Parade of Winners event held during the 2018 V.F.W. Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. on March 5, 2018.

Ledman, a junior in high school, earned an all expenses paid trip to the Washington Voice of Democracy event. The trip and a \$2,000 scholarship were awarded to him when he was proclaimed the Department of Minnesota V.F.W. 1st Place Winner at the Midwinter Banquet on January 20, 2018.

No stranger to the program, Logan placed 2nd at the Minnesota level of the competition in 2016-17. Throughout both years, he has been sponsored by the Eugene H. Traux V.F.W. Post #9343 located in Northfield, Minnesota.

In addition to the Washington trip last March, Ledman also earned the opportunity to attend the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge's Spirit of America Youth Leadership Program this summer. This all expenses paid event is designed exclusively for State Voice of Democracy winners. Once there, they will enjoy character-building exercises, learn about our form of

WINNER - Cont. Page 2



2017-18 State Commander Rick Bugbee

Member of
VFW Post 612
Fergus Falls, MN

Comrades,

A question that has been asked a lot this year, how is your year going? Well, how is it? My year goes only as well as each and every one of the members of this great organization does. That is the truth and none of us can deny that.

Some of the posts in our state have lost touch with what their responsibilities are. Those are the posts that the headquarters office and the line officers have been working on to get back to where they need to be, constructive posts. We have, as well as you, had our ups and downs this year. I truly believe that if each and every one of the posts would follow the by-laws, they would not have any difficulty in being an active post. Guess what, if they all were following the by-laws and submitting ALL necessary paperwork, they would not be getting nasty grams or the need for the line officers and staff to mention them in any negative ways. Wouldn't that be great!!! Why do we request audits? One of the main reasons is this is an indication of how the post is doing. It is not that we want to stick our noses into your business. If

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State Convention Brings Year Full-Circle

This June, the Minnesota V.F.W. will conduct its 99th State Convention. Everyone is encouraged to attend as State Commander Rick Bugbee wraps up the 2017-18 year.

The State Convention can mean many things... the end of a hard worked year of PROGRAMS, the opportunity to participate in some important V.F.W. TRADITIONS, or even new opportunities for SERVICE. Regardless, it certainly serves to bring the year full circle.

Convention attendees can join in celebrating the Post and Auxiliary accomplishments in working their PROGRAMS. The V.F.W. and Auxiliary will continue the TRADITION of meetings and events throughout the weekend including Council meetings, Training programs, Awards, the Annual Memori-

al Service, and Convention Banquet. Finally, the Convention wraps up with perhaps the most important activity... the Election of Officers who will their SERVICE for the upcoming year.

VENUE

This year's Convention will be hosted by the V.F.W. Headquarters Office. Coming full circle, it will aptly be held at the ALL suite, Minneapolis Marriott Northwest Hotel as it was last year. Conveniently located just off Hwy 94/694 and Boone Avenue North in Brooklyn Park. This property is just a quick drive from the northwest suburbs shopping and dining mecca located in Maple Grove. This hotel provides beautiful accommodations with suites for every guest that include a living room separate from the

sleeping area that will be perfect for welcoming guests to visit. Convention attendees will be able to enjoy many spaces throughout the property to relax and enjoy visiting with old friends and meeting new ones. The Hotel restaurant will open early for breakfast Friday and Saturday.

PROGRAMS

Our organization prides itself on the camaraderie and honor we bestow upon our fellow Veterans. To this end, perhaps the most sacred portion of the V.F.W. year is our Annual Memorial Service conducted Friday evening at the Convention. Don't miss the heartfelt Memorial address, special music and the traditional guarding of the Memorial grave site by the Color Guard.

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Save The Date!! Upcoming VFW Events

State Convention
June 6-9, 2018
Marriott Northwest
Brooklyn Park

National Convention
July 21-25
Kansas City, MO

Please watch for Veterans Activity Dates in the General Orders or on the State VFW Web Page

VFW State Baseball Tournament
Aug. 9-12, 2018
Marshall

Fall Conference
Sept. 14-16, 2018
Willmar

Red Events are Department Events

Top News

MN VFW Claims Director Gohn Commended

Good morning,

I just wanted to share with you a recent success we had, largely due to Director Jon Gohn's hard work.

In Fall 2017, a veteran of mine who I had previously filed for bilateral hearing loss and tinnitus in 2015 came back to my office with a grim diagnosis and a denial letter from the VA. He had recently been diagnosed with cholangiocarcinoma (bile duct cancer), a highly aggressive form of terminal cancer. He served in Pakistan in the 1960s where waterborne liver flukes (the #1 cause of this cancer) are much more common. Regardless, the VA gave a standard "no diagnosis in service" denial for the condition. We immediately filed a Notice of Disagreement after the veteran sought out the opinion of a retired military physician who practices at the Mayo Clinic and wrote an affirming letter in the veteran's favor. This Notice of Disagreement was also quickly denied.

This is where Jon got involved. Knowing that the next step of sending the case to BVA could take several years that the veteran simply did not have, I asked Jon if he could help us out. Due to his diligent efforts and relationships, Judge Crowley expedited the case and wrote an opinion within *one week* in the veteran's favor. Yesterday the VA Regional Office here in St. Paul again expedited the final steps of the claim in writing the award letter and generating the benefit amount for the veteran (again after asking Jon to help us out).

The veteran has always had a positive attitude but was facing grave concerns that his wife might not be taken care of after he passes away. As a result of the chemotherapy, he has also lost much of his hearing ability and now, as a 100% service-connected veteran, will be able to get this covered by the VA Medical Center as well.

I am not usually one to thank people for "doing their job" as we should all strive to do, but Director Gohn truly went above and beyond for this veteran who was most in need and most deserving of the extra help. Jon is a credit to our profession and is constantly doing high-level work.

Best,
Alex Erickson
Service Representative
Hennepin County Veterans Service Office

WINNER- Cont. from Page 1

government, meet historical figures and explore their individual role as a citizen in today's America. Past State winners have cited this event as meaningful and unforgettable.

Established in 1947, the Voice of Democracy Audio Essay Competition celebrated it's 71st year with nearly 40,000 students addressing this year's theme "American History: Out Hope for the Future." The 2017-18 National Winner came from Mt. Airy, Maryland.

The Voice of Democracy Audio Essay Competition is held every fall with entries due to local V.F.W. Posts by October 31st. The com-

petition is open to student in 9-12th grade. The program is run in conjunction with a complementary middle school competition, Patriot's Pen, open to 6-8th grade students.

Minnesota's State Patriot's Pen winner was Noor Naseer, an 8th grader, sponsored by Everett McClay V.F.W. Post #1296 in Bloomington. Ms. Naseer earned 10th place and \$1,500 in the National level of the Competition.

To find out more about these programs and other V.F.W. and Auxiliary activities, please contact a local Post, read the monthly Department General Orders and future Overseas issues or visit the Minnesota V.F.W. and National V.F.W. websites.

The Former Dues Reserve Fund

'Something You Should Know'

For decades, the Post Quartermaster was 'required' to maintain a Post Dues Reserve Fund. This requirement was outlined in Section 218 – Officers and Chairmen, Duties and Obligations under Quartermaster and Section 717 – Dues Reserve.

At the 2017 VFW National Convention, By-Law changes to Section 218 and Section 717, removed that responsibility from the Post Quartermaster.

With that said, each and every Post and Post Quartermaster should know this:

At the time that this 'requirement' was removed from the VFW National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure --- the Dues Reserve Fund --- was a DEDICATED or Designated Fund. Therefore, the Post floor MUST approve any Transfer of Funds from that account.

Let's say that the Post wants the balance in that account transferred to the General Fund. A vote would have to be taken on the Post Floor to approve the transfer and removal of the Dues Reserve Fund (a Dedicated Account).

If you need any further clarification or have questions on this procedure, do not hesitate to contact the State Quartermaster at 651-291-1757 or vfwmn@aol.com.

~OPEN FOR ELECTION~

June 2018

OFFICER POSITION

DEPARTMENT QUARTERMASTER

for the Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars

Election to be held at the Annual State Convention

June 7-10, 2018

Minneapolis Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park

For more information
about running for 'Department Quartermaster' or
What this Officer Position entails at the State level...

Please contact:

Retired/Acting Department Quartermaster Jim Hesselgrave
Phone: 651-291-1757 or Email: vfwmn@aol.com

Minnesota VFW Office Locations

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Webpage: www.mn.gov/vfw

Department Claims Office:

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Whipple Federal Building, G900
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Phone: (612) 970-5669
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Minneapolis VA

Scott Sutherland
VFW Hospital Representative
Minneapolis VAMC
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GOPHER OVERSEAS

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Rick Bugbee, Commander; Tom Hanson, Sr. Vice Commander;
Chad Solheid, Jr. Vice Commander; Curt Hermanson, Judge Advocate.

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To: VFW National Headquarters
Data Entry Department
406 West 36th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111

Please Note the below address change: (Please Print)

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Department Headquarters News

Senior Vice Commander

By Thomas Hanson, State Senior Vice Commander

As this VFW year nears an end I'd like to offer a "tip of the cap" to all the members of the Department of Minnesota and the Auxiliary for your tenacity and dedication to our cause. At this point we still have a tough job in front of us in the matter of membership, but most of our other programs are at or near 100%. As we all know, the ardent connection we provide in our community is paramount to what we're all about. It also shows the other folks in our home town that our purpose is not the stereotypical prototype often associated with veterans service organizations and the building where we gather. So why am I sharing such an obvious and well known observation?

Because the choir isn't singing! My point is, we do so many special and valuable things in our community in addition to offering varying other humanitarian efforts, and we tell no one about it. We need to "blow our own horn"! For some reason we share a reluctance to publicize what we do. I want to encourage and implore that when your Post or Auxiliary is about to undertake some noteworthy activity, that you

approach the news outlets in and around your community and alert them to the fact you have an event or function taking place and ask for coverage. Most area newspapers and radio or television networks are looking for human interest stories; especially those that enhance the quality of life of their readers and patrons. If your Post has a Facebook page and/or web page, there is no better place to "blow up" your own publicity! If your Post or Auxiliary doesn't partake in social media, it's time to get with it! Any prospective new members surely are engaged on the internet and other media. Obviously, we need to be. I trust we all will become more aware of the fact that nobody but ourselves will be cognizant of our vital accomplishments unless we make a point of self promotion.

I'd like to take this time too to express my most humble appreciation to everyone for the friendship and courtesies extended to me during my travels as your Sr. Vice Commander. It's indeed an honor for me to act as your representative on behalf of the Department of Minnesota VFW.

Membership

By Frank Presfield, State Membership Chair

As this is the last Gopher Oversea'r for the current year, I thought I would reflect on the meaning of "Membership".

What does that term really mean? A person that helps constitute part of the whole. In the case of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, it can mean various things to each person.

They join to feel a camaraderie with men and women who have shared an experience that the majority of our citizenry never have and never will. The experience of knowing that being a member comes only to a few. A country with over 325 million inhabitants, but only 1 million currently have stood up as members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, put their self interests aside, and ventured into Harms Way in distant lands... That is sobering.

We all know that father time is taking its toll on membership. I know, just as many of you do, that the young combat veterans that are not yet members are the secret to our longevity. If we don't get them into our fold, they will pass us by for another organization or none at all. Then there's annual members that have not renewed. We recruited them once, why do we have to do it again? Is it our mistake? Did we not live up to their expectations?

There is one heck of a lot of work to be done. I asked a Past Commander-in-Chief once about changing some of the requirements for membership. He said, "You won't get it past the Council of Administration". I replied, "If there are no more wars, then we are dead in the water in time". Food for thought.

CMDR- Cont. from Page 1

the audit does not look good then we know that we can probably assist in some way. That is only if you let us. Remember two heads are better than one.

At the time of this writing our state was over 94% in membership. I feel that is really great. If each post signed up two new members, we would be at over 95%. That is a goal to work on. I know that in some parts of the state our VFW's are remote and the areas are not conducive to getting any younger members to join. Keep trying, ask.

I want to thank all of you for this and for all that you do for other Veterans. My year is about over, but our VFW mission is never over. Remember the saying, "Old Veterans never die, they just fade away." Well, I do not plan to fade away, I will continue to what I can for this organization and the veterans in this state.

I wish Tom, Chad, and Curt the best in the future year. We will have a new Judge Advocate, a new Quartermaster, and a new adjutant. I have enjoyed working with these fine men and will continue to assist in any way that I can. Please support them 100%.

WATCH the MAY GENERAL ORDERS!!

**Proposed National and State
By-Laws & Resolutions
will be posted in the May General Orders**

AFTER APRIL 30th...

If you would like a copy sent to you by email or USPS please let us know at melodymnvfw@vfwmn.us or call State Headquarters at 651-291-1757

ATTENDING STATE CONVENTION:

VFW National
Representative

John E. Moon
Past Commander-in-Chief
1997-1998



John E. Moon was elected VFW Commander-in-Chief at the organization's 98th National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, on August 21, 1997.

Moon served in the United States Marine Corps from July 1968 to July 1970. While stationed in Vietnam, he was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Regiment, 3rd Marine Division. In recognition of his service he received the Vietnam Service Medal with three bronze stars, the Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, Republic of Vietnam Civil Actions Unit Citation, Combat Action Ribbon and the National Defense Service Medal.

He joined the VFW in April 1970 at Post 5665, Sherwood, Ohio. He served two terms as Post Commander there. He then transferred to VFW Post 2873, Grover Hill, where he remains active today. He served three years as Post Commander and attained All-State honors for two years. He has served at the County Council level and has served as District Commander.

At the Department level, he has served as chairman of several committees, including legislation, membership, Vietnam veterans, National Home, and the Ohio Caravan Chairman that visits the VFW National Home every year. He was an All American Department Commander for the year 1987-1988 and was elected to the National Council of Administration in 1988.

National appointments have included chairman of the Veterans Service committee, National Security and Foreign Affairs, and Americanism committee and assignments to the POW/MIA, Budget and Finance, Veterans Service, Legislative committees and Civil Service and Employment.

Moon attended Northwest State College, where he earned degrees in Business Management and Human Resources. In 2001, he was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award by the college. He retired from the United States Department of Labor as an Assistant Director of Veterans Employment and Training Services. In 2003 Moon received the Seven Seals Distinguished Service Citation from the Employment Support Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Organization. In 2005 he was inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame for his work for veterans and his community.

He holds other memberships in the DAV, AMVETS, American Legion, and Marine Corps League. He served for 16 years as the mayor of Grover Hill, Ohio.

He is married to the former Susan Golliver; the Moons have four children, seven grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

Minnesota Auxiliary News



**STATE PRESIDENT
VFW Auxiliary**
Gail Brekke



Member of
VFW Post 1223
Dilworth, MN

It's hard to believe that our program year has wrapped up and our year-end reports are filed. Congratulations and thank you to all officers and chairmen that worked so hard to make the 2017-2018 program year a success. Your efforts are to be commended and I hope to see many of you at our Department Convention in Maple Grove June 6-9, 2018. Many awards will be given out during our Department Convention and I am excited to see who will be taking home these accolades.

Congratulations to our Voice of Democracy winner Logan Ledman who took 7th Place in the Nation, Logan received \$5,000 for his achievement. It was an honor to escort Logan into the awards ceremony with our Department Commander Rick. While in Washington D.C. we spent time visiting with our elected officials and shared with them the need for their support in the fight for Veterans rights and benefits. Thanks to our VFW delegation for including me in these visits and all your events, it meant so much.

Our National Convention will take place in Kansas City, MO July 21-25, 2018 and you should be making plans now to attend this great event. It is vital that we attend the National Convention to vote in order

to help steer our organization into the future so that we can insure continued growth and success. Our Department Chairmen have been working hard and I want to thank them for all their efforts, I am certain Minnesota will be receiving several awards during our National Convention and I hope that you will be there to celebrate with me!

Please remember the reasons we joined this organization and offer your assistance when and where you can to your local Post and Auxiliary. Engage members that have been gone for a while and recruit those enthusiastic new members to help us move forward with new ideas and vitality. We need all members to make our programs, fundraisers and community activities work. You are what make Minnesota VFW and VFW Auxiliary great!

I want to thank everyone for the support they gave me during this year and for the hard work that everyone did to make it so enjoyable. Thanks to every Post, Auxiliary, Comrade, Sister and Brother that made me feel welcome and extended courtesies when I attended events around the state. I look forward to working with all of you in the future and I wish much success to all who take on new roles in the coming year.

Membership

By Jamie Cassavant, State Membership Chair

Greetings Minnesota VFW Post and VFW Auxiliary Family:

Minnesota is Marvelous and Magnificent in all that we, as an organization, do for our veterans, military, their families and our communities. Think about how our Posts and Auxiliaries would benefit by having more members. There would be more hands to help with our programs and events, more members to help lobby Congress about issues important to our heroes and their families, and more money to help our veterans and our programs.

The top five Minnesota Districts in membership (above 90%)

as of 5:30 a.m. March 22, 2018 are: District 7 - 1st place at 92.37%, District 4 - 2nd place at 91.96%, District 1 - 3rd place at 91.39%, District 5 - 4th place at 91.30%, District 8 - 5th place at 90.71% The remaining 4 districts percentages range from 89.43% to 74.24%.

Ask potential members to join us and MAKE A DIFFERENCE in the lives of our veterans, active duty military and their families. But, we have work left to do – let's reach 100% which will then improve the lives of veterans, active-duty military, their families, and our communities.

NEW for 2018 Convention

**VFW Auxiliary
Delegate Invoices
Will be Mailed to
Each Auxiliary
The week of April 2, 2018
Please Remit the
Delegate Fees by
May 23, 2018**

**Don't Go It Alone!!!
THERE'S HELP!!! JUST CALL!!!**

ATTENDING STATE CONVENTION:

**Auxiliary National
Representative**

**Jane Reape
National Guard
2017-2018**



Jane Reape, of Carthage, N.Y., was elected National Guard of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) of the United States Auxiliary at its 104th National Convention in New Orleans, La., on July 26, 2017.

She is now in the first of five offices leading to the National Presidency, which she is expected to hold in 2022-2023.

A Life Member of Dionne-Rumble Auxiliary 7227, she has served the organization in many capacities including Auxiliary, District and Department (state) President.

On the National level she has served as National Director for the Scholarships program, Eastern Conference Chairman for the Americanism/Patriotic Instructor and Youth Activities programs and as National District Council Member representing New York.

She joined on the eligibility of her late husband, James, who served in the U.S. Air Force from 1961-1983.

In her spare time she enjoys travelling; she has visited all 50 states, most Canadian Provinces, Europe, the Mediterranean and the British Isles. She loves reading, quilting, knitting, crocheting, cross-stitching and cross country skiing.

Jane's family includes three children and three grandchildren.

“Preserving and Extending Veterans Rights, Advocating a Strong National Defense, Promoting Patriotism and Serving Local Communities” – Veterans of Foreign Wars Founding Principles

Claims and Service Office Report

By Jon Gohn, Claims Director

Decision Ready Claims

Many of you may or may not know that our St. Paul VA Regional Office is far above par when it comes to the rest of the Nation. We here at your VFW Claims Office do our best to not only maintain a great working relationship with the VA, but are called on when there are new pilot programs that are initiated. Our staffs professionalism and proficiency is key to us being asked to help participate in these programs.

For the past year and a half we have assisted in developing the Decision Ready Claims (DRC) program, and have actively participated in all phases of the program. The DRC program allows a veteran to submit a VA compensation claim that is complete so it can be processed as fast as possible.

In order to participate in the DRC program, the veteran must have an accredited Veterans Service Organization to assist them with it. As your VFW Claims Office has been actively participating in this program since its inception, we encourage you to utilize this office to assist you in determining whether or not your claim first meets the standards necessary to participate. If you are represented by another organization, inquire with them if you have a new claim that could possibly benefit from it.

You must also have all relevant and required evidence to support your claim for a timely decision. Recent treatment notes, diagnosis or opinions regarding the severity of your claimed condition(s) are all very relevant and helpful for the claim.

Currently, if a compensation and pension exam is necessary, they are scheduled with third party examiners to complete. Those two companies here in Minnesota that performs those exams are Logistics Health Incorporated (LHI) and QTC Medical Services (QTC). These are completed in various locations throughout the state.

As of now there are only certain compensation claims that are allowed within the DRC Program. They are as follows:

Direct Service Connection Claims

Claims for conditions that began during your military service or caused by an event while serving. Presumptive Service Connection Claims: Claims for conditions that are presumed to have been caused by an event during your military service, even if there is no specific evidence showing a connection between your condition and your military service in your service records. This includes conditions related to Agent Orange, chronic disabilities, and the following conditions tied to service

during the Gulf War. Current Gulf War conditions that are presumptive include fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome and functional gastrointestinal disorders.

Secondary Service Connection Claims

Claims for conditions that were caused or aggravated by a service-connected disability.

Increased Disability Claims: Claims for existing service-connected conditions that you have medical evidence to show they have gotten worse.

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC): Claims for surviving spouses of veterans whose death resulted from a service related injury or disease or who was rated 100% disabled due to service-connected conditions (including entitlement to Individual Unemployability) for 10 years or more prior to the date of death.

Pre-Discharge Claim

Claims for disability compensation filed by Service members who have less than 90 days remaining before their separation from military service.

The VA is currently working to expand the DRC Program to include more types of claims. If you are curious as to what types of claims are excluded from this program you can visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/drc.asp>

If you are still wondering how or if you should participate in the DRC Program, here is a final breakdown of what you need to do. Work with your VSO to help determine if the DRC Program is the right course of action for you and your claim. They will inform you of all necessary information you will need. Your VSO will review your evidence and request an exam for you, if it is necessary.

Your VSO will check to make sure all information is included. They will review your medical evidence, to include your VA exam, and determine if it will be instrumental or detrimental to your claim.

You, along with your VSO, will then formalize your application to ensure your claim goes directly to a VA rating specialist.

Remember, you can only participate in this program if you have a Veterans Service Organization representing you for your claim. We have direct access to all VA systems, and are trained in both the pros and cons of individual claims and their potential relevance to the DRC program.

For further questions that may arise please feel free to contact this office at (612) 970-5669.

President Trump Signs Executive Order Aimed at Reducing Veteran Suicides

By VFW National Veterans Services

On January 9, 2018, President Trump signed an executive order requiring the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Homeland Security to develop and implement a joint action plan which would ensure transitioning service members have access to mental health care services.

The White House announced that veterans who are 3 to 12 months out of military service are three times more likely to die from suicide than

their active-duty counterparts, while those up to three months out of service were 2.5 times as likely, according to a study from the Naval Postgraduate School.

One of the goals of the executive order is to provide eligibility for VA mental health care for all veterans who are within a year of their date of discharge. Additional information regarding this plan will be distributed once it is available.

Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP)

Due to the backlog of veteran's appeals, the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 became law on August 23, 2017 (Pub L. 155-55). This law was enacted to modernize the current claims and appeals process. It was seen with the numerous amounts of appeals awaiting decision across the Nation, which improvements had to be made. The thought process was to streamline claims and appeals process to provide the veteran with the earliest possible resolution for their claim, and provide certain safeguards to ensure the veteran receives the earliest effective date for their claim.

The appeals portion for the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act bore the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP). So what exactly is the RAMP Program? It is a program that was initiated with the hopes of providing the eligible appellants with the earliest possible resolution regarding their disagreement with the VA's decision on their claim.

Currently RAMP is voluntary, and begins with an invitation from the VA to potentially participate within it. The VA has stated that under RAMP, veterans can expect to receive a decision on their disagreement much faster than if they remained in their current legacy appeals process.

RAMP is an integral part of the Appeals Modernization Act. The belief is that it will help the VA re-

gional offices have a bit more authority then before to act on disagreements. It should help to bridge the divide between the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Board of Veterans' Administration.

As it currently stands there are only two options for RAMP. They include a Supplemental Claim Lane and a Higher-Level Review Lane.

The Supplemental Claim Lane allows the veteran to submit additional evidence that is both new and relevant to support the potential grant of the requested benefit. The VA will follow their duty to assist by gathering any new and relevant evidence to support the claim, and review it to see if a different decision can be made since the veteran's last claim decision. This can be done multiple times. If the veteran wishes to elevate their request, they can opt for a Higher-Level Review. This must be requested within one year of the Supplemental Decision.

The Higher-Level Review does not require the veteran to submit any additional evidence, especially if the veteran is adamant that there was an error in the initial decision. This will consist of an entirely new review of the claim by a senior claims adjudicator. Keep in mind that the VA will only consider evidence that was in the VA's possession at the time of the opt-in to RAMP. You CANNOT add new evidence during this process. To be able to explain why you

RAMP - Cont. Page 14

Need Help with your Veterans Benefits and Entitlements?

CALL the VFW Claims Service Office at:

612-970-5669

Capital Hill Press

By Tom McLaughlin, Legislative Chairman

2018 has been a very busy legislative year so far with our March trip to the Washington Legislative Conference and Veterans Day on the Hill at the state capital.

Commander Rick Bugbee and state officers from the VFW and Auxiliary made the trip to Washington D.C. March 4th - March 8th. We attended our legislative sessions presented by the VFW National Legislative staff and made trips to Capitol Hill to visit Minnesota's congressional delegation. We were well received by our representatives and were able to meet with nine of our ten members and present our National Legislative Priorities for 2018 to them. Wednesday the 7th most of our members were able to attend our VFW Commander-in-Chiefs Testimony before the joint Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee to present our priorities.

The Commander-in-Chiefs message is clear and to the point. They must end Sequestration and Continuing Resolutions by reforming the budget process and doing away with arbitrary budget caps that threaten our national security and limit our ability to provide service members, Veterans, and their families the care and benefits they deserve. Congress must pass full year appropriations for the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration. Another Continuing Resolution would severely hinder long term planning and limit the administration's ability to respond to global threats and changes in Veteran's programs.

Surveys that the VFW has done show that most Veterans are satisfied with services they receive from VA hospitals. Community Care in a timely manner may be best for the Veteran when distance or appointment availability deems



it necessary. We urge swift passage of S.2193, The Caring for Our Veterans Act of 2017. Its passage would improve and consolidate the VA's disparate community care programs to eliminate confusion among Veterans, VA staff, and community care doctors as to when and how Veterans access the private sector. Authorize Veterans and their health care teams to determine when and where Veterans receive their health care. It would expand the VA's caregiver program to give Veterans of all eras the opportunity to live at home with loved ones as long as possible. Establish a much needed community walk-in care benefit to reduce the reliance on emergency room care when a Veteran needs urgent care. Increase the VA's graduate medical education residency positions at VA medical facilities across the county, including rural and tribal areas. Enable VA doctors to provide telemedicine regardless of where a Veteran is located. Improve recruitment and retention benefits so the VA can hire and retain high quality health care professionals. Provide the VA with much needed supplement appropriations and improved authorities to expand and improve its aging capital infrastructure.

Congress must pass legisla-

tion to care for the needs of Veterans who suffer from conditions related to Toxic Exposures from Agent Orange while serving in Vietnam or Blue Water Navy Veterans as well as those who served on the Korean DMZ and bases in Thailand were defoliants were used. Congress passing H.R. 299 or 422 the Blue Water Navy Act of 2017, would expand VA benefits and services to Blue Water Navy Veterans. The passage of H.R. 3605, the Fairness for Korean DMZ Veterans Act of 2017, would expand the period of time that Veterans on the Korean DMZ are known to have been exposed to Agent Orange. The passing of H.R. 632 or S.283, the Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act, would expand benefits that were exposed to radiation from atomic testing and clean up. Veterans who served on bases in Thailand during the Vietnam War would receive benefits for conditions related to Agent Orange with the passage of H.R. 4843, or S.2105.

Congress must pass legislation related to burn pit exposures in Iraq and Afghanistan and continue to fund research on the causes and effective treatments for Gulf War Illness.

Veterans Health Care is always a priority in our legislative program and some of our major concerns are addressing the 14 Veterans who die by suicide every day who do not our VA health care system. Congress must provide the VA resources it needs to ensure its health care service programs are equal among men and women Veterans.

Congress must also commission toxic exposures research to gender-specific health ailments. As well as how it has affected reproduction for Veterans who were exposed to toxic substances. Congress must pass H.R. 1100. or S.1161, to remove

copayment requirements for VA preventative care prescriptions.

Congress must pass H.R. 2452, or S.681 to improve gender-specific care and benefits for women Veterans. Congress must pass H.R. 2652, S.922 to review the total number of Veterans who died by suicide and circumstances of each death, and to recommend ways to prevent over medication. The VFW has long worked Concurrent Receipt our Veterans with 20 or more years of service that have a service connected disability and widows that have been denied Survivor Benefit Plan and Dependency and Indemnity Payment.

Our solutions assuring these Veterans and widows are treated fairly is passing H.R. 303, or S.66 the Retired Pay Restoration Act, which would enable disabled retirees to concurrently receive the retirement pay and VA disability compensation they have earned and deserve.

Congress must pass H.R. 846, the Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act, or S. 339, the Military Widow's Tax Elimination Act of 2017, which would honor the sacrifices of our nation's heroes by ensuring their survivors are able to maintain at least a modest quality of life, without having to unjustly offset their benefits.

At our Department of Minnesota State Convention at the Minneapolis Marriott N. W. in Brooklyn Park June 7th-10th I will be able to update our membership on our State Legislative Priority Goals and how many of them made it into law. During the convention the Schools of Instructions for Post officers will take place on Friday June 8th at 1p.m. and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

**Be Part of the
Legislative Process to
Protect Veterans Rights
and Entitlements....**

**PAY YOUR ANNUAL
DUES or Better Yet,
Become a Life Member**

During the V.F.W. Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Minnesota V.F.W. and Auxiliary Members met with MN Representatives to discuss the 2018 Priority Goals.

Pictured left to right: State CMDR Rick Bugbee, State Legislative Chair Tom McLaughlin, Kari-
anne Hermanson (AUX), State Judge Advocate
Curt Hermanson, 7th District CMDR Doug Johnson, Congressman Colin Peterson (7th District), State Jr. Vice CMDR Chad Solheid, Sarah Bugbee (AUX), State Surgeon Dr. Jim Tuorila, Nancy Bohmer (AUX)



State Convention - June 6-10, 2018

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA

2018 State Convention

Minneapolis Marriott Northwest- Brooklyn Park/Maple Grove, Minnesota

As of 3/29/18

JUNE 6-10, 2018

WEDNESDAY, June 6:

5:00 PM – 7:00 PM Early Registration for OTI
6:00 – 8:30 PM District Officers Leadership Training

THURSDAY, June 7:

7:00 AM – 9:00 AM OTI & ATS Registration (Aux. times may vary)
9 AM – 3 PM & 5 - 7 PM VFW Convention Registration
1:00 – 4:00 PM Auxiliary Convention Registration (Aux. times may vary)

OFFICERS TRAINING SCHOOL:

8:00 AM – 4:00 PM **VFW Officers Training Institute**
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM **Auxiliary Training Seminars**

STATE CONVENTION BUSINESS:

4:30 – 6:00 PM Finance Committee meeting
6:00 – 7:00 PM Dept. of MN V.F.W. Charitable Assoc. meeting
7:00 – 9:00 PM **Auxiliary Council of Administration**
7:00 – 9:00 PM **V.F.W. Council of Administration meeting**

FRIDAY, JUNE 8:

6:00 AM - 7:00 AM Rise & Shine Workouts (Watch for Details at Registration)
8:00 AM – 4:00 PM VFW Registration
8:00 AM – 3:00 PM Auxiliary Registration (Aux. times may vary)
9:00 AM – 11:30 AM **V.F.W. and Auxiliary Joint Awards Session**
11:45 AM Past State Commanders and Presidents Luncheon
1:30 – 4:30 PM **Opening Auxiliary Convention**
1:00 – 2:00 PM **V.F.W. COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

1. National Security/Foreign Affairs/POW
2. By-Laws/Ritual/Rules
3. General Resolutions/Extension-Membership
4. Finance/Internal Affairs
5. Legislative/Veterans' Service/Employment

2:30 – 4:30 PM Gambling Meeting
6:00 – 7:00 PM **Memorial Service (Joint VFW & Auxiliary)**

SATURDAY, JUNE 10:

6:00 AM - 7:00 AM Rise & Shine Workouts (Watch for Details at Registration)
8:00 AM – 1:30 PM VFW Registration
8:00 AM – 3:00 PM Auxiliary Registration (Aux. times may vary)
9:00 AM – 4:00 PM **Auxiliary Convention Session**
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM **Open VFW Convention**
12:00 Noon Recess
1:15 PM – 3:15 PM **Caucuses**
4:00 – 5:00 PM Church Service
5:30 – 6:45 PM Social
7:00 PM **Banquet**

SUNDAY, June 11:

7:30 AM – 9:30 AM VFW Registration
9:00 AM – 11:30 AM **Reconvene VFW Convention**
8:30 – 11:30 AM **Auxiliary Convention Session**
12:00 – 12:45 PM **Joint Installation of Officers****
12:45 – 1:00 PM Council of Administration Brief 2017-18 Meetings
12:45 PM Auxiliary Brief 2017-18 C of A Meeting

**Reception Immediately Following Installation /Brief C of A Meetings

CONV- from Page 1

Watch for a special display entitled "I am Not Invisible" (IANI). This multimedia campaign designed to honor women veterans and educate the public about some of the unique challenges of women veterans. As part of this special event, we are honored to have one of the women veterans from the IANI campaign that will present the Memorial Address at Friday evening's service.

The over arching theme of a functioning V.F.W. and Auxiliary is working the Programs... reaching out to Veterans, Active Duty Military and our Communities. During the Thursday evening Council Meeting, program reports will be given along with any business needing action.

Joining us for the State convention will be VFW Past National Commander-in-Chief John Moon and Auxiliary National Guard Jane Reape. Committees will meet Friday to discuss proposed By-Law changes, Resolutions and Committee reports will be presented Saturday morning when the Convention convenes. During this time, there will be the nomination of Department Officers for the 2018-19 year. There will be an opportunity for each District to Caucus and meet the candidates prior to Sunday's Convention. During the Sunday Convention Meeting, Committee's will wrap up and the election of Officers will ensue.

TRADITION

Whether the Victories are large or small, personal or organisational, it is TRADITION to celebrate these accomplishments at State Convention! Friday starts off with the always anticipated Joint Awards Session. Here we honor the outstanding accomplishments of our Posts and Auxiliaries. This includes many of our programs including Poppies, Community Service and Publications. The V.F.W. will name the All-State Post Quartermasters and Commanders... some of the greatest honors bestowed upon a Post.

Saturday's banquet brings

an opportunity to honor those that serve our communities. The 99th Annual Convention Banquet will serve as a celebration of the Safety Award recipients and Scout of the Year honoree. The evening wraps-up with perhaps the most anticipated announcement- the Captain of the All-State Commanders Team. This is sure to be a humbling and exciting evening!

The final celebration of the weekend is the Joint Installation of Officers Sunday after the Conventions close. Here both V.F.W. and Auxiliary Officers will be installed. Following the ceremony, the incoming Commander and President will host a reception. Please join them as they anticipate the excitement of their upcoming year.

SERVICE

The June State Convention holds valuable opportunities to prepare for SERVICE through the 2018-19 year. All newly elected program chairs, officers and members on all levels will want to learn about all that the V.F.W. and Auxiliary do and how it should be done.

Training will start on Wednesday, June 6th with a required, roundtable session for District V.F.W. Officers. On Thursday, schools of instruction will be available for everyone. Registration for Training will also include copies of Manuals and materials for a successful year, beverages and lunch.

For V.F.W. Members, there is the 34th Annual Officer's Training Institute (OTI). The Commander's School will cover everything from Leadership to Membership and from Programs to Veterans Benefits. Instructors will include both newer and seasoned leaders with proven experience in their areas. The Quartermaster School will cover best practices in handling funds, bookkeeping, rules & regulations and much more... NEW this year, Quartermaster attendees are welcome to bring their laptops or tablets to use during training.

CONV - Cont. Page 3

V.F.W. Convention Housing Reservations

Brooklyn Park/Maple Grove, MN June 6-10, 2018

(OTI June 7th & Convention June 7th-10th)
(District Officers Training- June 6th, 6-9 pm)

Name (Please PRINT in Boxes)

Complete Address: _____

Phone _____ Email _____ Post/Auxiliary # _____ District # _____

Arrival Date: _____ Departure Date: _____ Sharing room with: _____

Requests: _____

Marriot NW **King Suite \$99⁺⁺** (per night) **2-Double Suite \$99⁺⁺** (per night)

Credit Card Information (Reservation will not be made without a guarantee)
Credit Card Type: Visa Mastercard Discover American Express Expiration Date: _____
Card Number: _____ Name on Card: _____

OR
Check # _____ for one (1) night made out to the **Minneapolis Marriott NW**

DEADLINE DATE:
May 18, 2018

Mail Housing Reservations to:
Department of Minnesota- VFW, Rice Street Station
PO Box 17146, St Paul, MN 55117

Convention Banquet

Saturday, June 9, 2018, Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park, MN

Please reserve _____ tickets at **\$27.00 each**. Enclosed is check # _____ for \$ _____.

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Post/Aux # _____ District # _____

MENU: TBD- Watch the General Orders and the State VFW Website: www.mn.gov/vfw/Convention

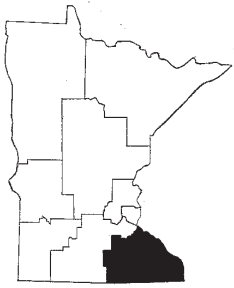
Tickets will NOT be mailed & can be picked up at Registration

Deadline: May 31, 2018

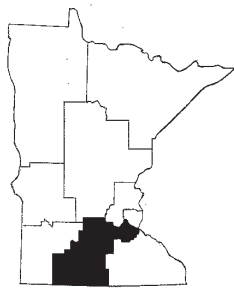
Mail Banquet Reservations to:
Department of Minnesota, VFW, Rice Street Station
PO Box 17146, St Paul, MN 55117

10th ANNUAL OFFICER'S TRAINING SCHOOL (OTI)	8th ANNUAL Auxiliary Training Seminar (ATS)
TO: VFW Members & Officers on ALL Levels	TO: VFW Auxiliary Members on All Levels
WHAT: OFFICER'S TRAINING SCHOOL	WHAT: Leadership Seminars
WHEN: JUNE 7, 2018	WHEN: JUNE 7, 2018
WHERE: Minneapolis Marriott Northwest 7025 Northland Drive N, Brooklyn Park, MN 55428	WHERE: Minneapolis Marriott Northwest 7025 Northland Drive N, Brooklyn Park, MN 55428
TIME: 8:00 - 3:00 P.M., Thurs. June 7th	TIME: 9:00 AM-5 PM, Thurs. June 7th
CHOOSE from 'Commander' (Leadership) Class or 'Quartermaster' (Financial/Trustee) Class	-Receive a Hard Copy of the NATIONAL PROGRAM BOOK - 'Learn about Auxiliary Programs, Policies and Procedures'
COST: \$75.00 per person by May 23, 2018 - includes morning 'coffee', lunch, registration and supplies.	COST: \$35.00 per person by May 23, 2018 - includes morning 'coffee', lunch, registration and supplies.
OFFICER'S TRAINING SCHOOL	Auxiliary Training Seminar REGISTRATION
Full Name _____	Full Name _____
Primary Phone # _____ Post # _____ District # _____	Primary Phone # _____ Aux. # _____ District # _____
Attending: _____ Commander School OR _____ Quartermaster School	Email (or Mail) Address To receive Confirmation: _____
Email (or Mail) Address To receive Confirmation: _____	Enclosed is \$ _____ for my reservation at \$35.00 each for A.T.S. June 7, 2018.
Enclosed is \$ _____ for my reservation at \$75.00 each for OTI June 7, 2018. Make checks payable to "Department of Minnesota, V.F.W."	Make checks payable to "Department of Minnesota, V.F.W."
MAIL FORM TO: Department of Minnesota, V.F.W. Rice Street Station, PO Box 17146, St Paul, MN 55117	MAIL FORM TO: Department of Minnesota, V.F.W. Rice Street Station, PO Box 17146, St Paul, MN 55117

News from YOUR District Commanders and Presidents!



**Mike Meyer, Commander
First District**



**Dale Hooegeven, Commander
Second District**

1st District, River Rats

Greetings Comrades,

Wow, This year has flown by!!!! I want to start by congratulating the river rats again for being 1st place in membership as of march 2018 at 95.50%. Thank-you, to my team for the hard work. Congratulations to all the state poppy display winners, there was some very nice displays at mid-winter. Congratulations to Logan, Northfield's voice of democracy state winner! He went to national and received 7th place. Very well done, Logan.

This has been a fun year and I look forward to poppy distribution and finishing strong in membership. Keep going team river rats, we "CAN DO".

The 1st district meeting schedule is as follows for the rest of the year:

May 5th 2018 Qwatonna

Let's keep up the great team work so we can have an outstanding year, so let's go team river rats we, "CAN DO".



How Many Cootie Bugs Can You Find in this Issue?

Answer on Page 15

Cootie Corner

By Scott Sutherland, Minnesota Cootie Grand Commander

My final greetings to the Grand of Minnesota Military Order of the Cootie and Department of Minnesota VFW. It has been my distinct honor and privilege to serve as MOC Grand Commander this year. To all the many Cooties and Volunteers – thank you for the dedication and devotion and hard work you put in. The appreciation is unending and duly noted. As well, I do believe we had some "phun" along the way as we attempted to provide the same to

our many Veterans in the VA hospitals and Minnesota Veterans Homes. I am very proud to have witnessed such selflessness by so many!

We did great things in the Grand this year. Again, to all you VFW members in good standing, if you're not a Cootie already, as I asked before, "why not?" Join us, it really is "phun," and once more, simply because it's the right thing to do. As always, we "leave 'em smiling in beds of white!"



congratulations and thank you to all posts sponsoring entries this year. Our department winner, Logan Ledman of the 1st District, was rewarded for his outstanding entry placing 7th in the national competition earning a \$5000 scholarship. Please share this information with your local school administrators and teachers as you encourage them to support a wonderful program. I'd like to see the judges at post and district level overwhelmed by the number of entries next year! Amanda Adams of Eagan High School sponsored by S. St Paul Post 295 and auxiliary was recognized as the state high school teacher of the year – congratulations to all! Our communities are blessed with so many talented people worthy of recognition through the many programs we sponsor. As you talk with school administrators, fire chiefs, police chiefs, etc.. about those programs, please convey the message that we aren't asking them to specify a member of their team as being the "best". We are asking them to give us the opportunity to recognize a worthy individual(s) in our communities for the good work they do on our behalf each and every day.

Post inspections have been completed with most posts achieving excellent results. I am proud of the work our district inspectors did enforcing the standards of our by-laws to ensure State Commander Bugbee was given an accurate assessment of the 2nd District. We only get better by acknowledging our weaknesses and correcting them. Thank you to all post officers and trustees for your cooperation and willingness to take corrective action as needed. Thank you to Chief Inspector Grindland for the quality training conducted to ensure our inspectors were extremely well prepared to carry out that mission.

Post elections and installation of officers must be completed prior to the State Convention which will be held from 8-10 June in Brooklyn Park. Post commanders, please make every effort to attend the convention or have a post representative attend to ensure your post delegate votes are counted. The comrades running for positions at the state level deserve our support and thoughtful consideration of their candidacy. We will be electing a new state judge advocate and a new state quartermaster – two positions vital to our future success. Our year is rapidly drawing to a close however much work remains to be done. Membership continues to be a major challenge and while statistics continue to be the measuring stick for success, I ask you to consider the effect of declining membership. As a national organization our effectiveness and ability to influence legislation with the accompanying funding for veteran's benefits, our VA healthcare system, and many other programs benefitting veterans and their families will be degraded. The Veterans of Foreign Wars works hard every day on our behalf, let's do our part by continuing to recruit new members, reinstate former members and retain our annual dues paying members. The message to young veterans should convey the importance of sustaining a strong organization not only for their benefit but for that of future generations, their children and grandchildren as well. Congratulations to Posts 1783, 2854, 4297, 5340 and 9433 for achieving 100% in membership. However, do not be satisfied with that worthy accomplishment. Offer it as a reason for other veterans to join your post as you continue to recruit. Let's finish strong and pass the other districts to set the example for the Department of Minnesota!



**Paty Thron, Auxiliary
President Second District**

I would like to start out congratulating all Auxiliaries in Second District as they have been very successful in aiding our Veterans and their families. I will be honoring all Past District Presidents at our Loyalty Days Convention in Lakeville April 28.

Our District meetings have been wonderful Schools of Instruction for our members. I am so proud of all the Officers and chairmen of the programs. I look forward to hearing a lot of awards for you all at the Department Convention in June.

One item to take notice of that is new this year: Delegate fees. All the information is in the April General Orders. If you need help understanding this new item, feel free to call me.

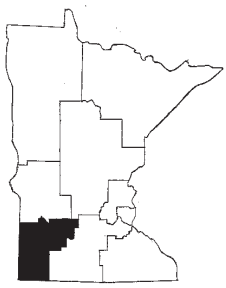
Membership has been slow this year. Some Auxiliaries only need one or two members to be 100%. You can do this...it is an ongoing program...don't stop !!

I would like to thank Second District for their faith in me and their hard work for the Veterans. I am excited to hear all the year end reports and awards at Loyalty Days Convention. Remember election of officers will also be held at that time. Please consider "stepping up" and taking a chairmanship and/or an office. We need each and everyone of you.

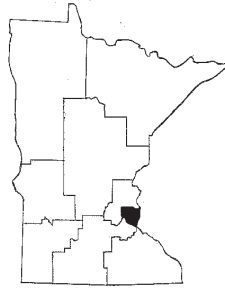
In closing, thank you to everyone for your love, hard work and dedication to our Veterans not only this year, but all the years past and years to come.

May no Soldier go unloved, May no Soldier walk alone, May no Soldier be forgotten, Until they ALL come home.

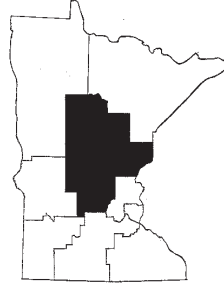
Catch the Dream for our Veterans With Unwavering Support.



**Buck Underwood, Commander
Third District**



**Vernon Bolle Jr., Commander
Fourth District**



**Thomas Tauber, Commander
Sixth District**

First of all I would like to thank all of the Post Commanders and members for a great first year as your District Commander.

Let us keep comradeship going into the year to come, you are a great group to work with. This goes for the Auxiliary also. Without your great work our District would not be complete. I will be trying to do my best in the year to come., and pray for your continued support.

We have a convention coming up in June at which time we will find out who are new State and District Officers will be. Keep up the good work.

Greeting Comrades and Auxiliary.

I want to take this time to thank my line officers and my committee chairmen for the hard work they have done this year also I want to thank the post commanders for the hard work they have done .

It's almost the end of my year. The 4th district may be in last place when I Wright this but the membership year in not done yet. One more membership push will be planned.

The 4th district has been very busy with membership pickups and fundraising and also trying to hold post together we lost one more post on my watch. So that's leave only 9 post in are District it might be time to look into redistricting or the 4th might me gone.

It has been Fun running all over the state and meeting new and seeing old comrades. As my year get to a close I hope that I can find ways to help this great organizing.

Greetings from the "Fighting Sixth"

The year is slowly slipping away. The Posts that have not paid your annual fees,turned in all of your audits, and whatever else you failed to do, get it sent in soon.

Membership is coming along slowly, keep working on it. "Remember-No Member- No VFW" This is especially for the 6th district, we won 2 innings of the baseball game. We need a few more to win the ballgame.

Fall and winter have been very busy with membership dinners, visits and inspections. Thanks to all the posts that invited myself and my wife to their dinners.

Nominations and elections are coming. You have many valuable members in you post that would like to serve at the post, Elect them to serve at your post.

In the past 2 weeks we lost 2 past district Commanders. Darrel Olson from McGregor. His funeral and memorial was Sat. March 17. "Chuck" Venske's funeral will be Mon. March 19 at 11:00. He is from Wadena Post T h a t will do for now, get out there and recruit. See you all at the Convention in June.

**REMEMBER THE
SACRIFICE...
MEMORIAL DAY
May 28, 2018**



**Cleo Bonham, Auxiliary
President Fourth District**

The 4th District Auxiliary has been busy this winter. After our January 6th meeting, we made 3 "no sew" fleece blankets and matching pillows. Each blanket is decorated with one branch of service: Army, Navy and Marine Corps. Joanne Brown took the blankets to the Minneapolis Veterans Home. They liked them so much that they asked us to make one for the Air Force and Coast Guard. For Memorial Day, a drawing will be held to see who will receive each blanket and pillow.

In mid January, the District had a Bowling tournament. It was for primarily for fun but it was also a fundraiser for the district. Woodbury Post and Auxiliary #9024 had

an awards banquet for students and first responders. It was an honor to meet so many outstanding students and members of the community.

In March, the district held a Family Freedom Festival at the Maplewood Mall. We distributed more than 100 flags and patriotic coloring books to children. We had displays about the major VFWA programs and spoke with many members of the public. Thanks to all the Auxiliary members who donated their time and talents to make this a great project.

Our district convention will be on Saturday, April 21st at Roseville VFW Post #7555. There will be a memorial service at 8 a.m. followed by the meeting at 9. Election of officers will take place at the convention with the installation of officers to follow directly after the meeting.

DISTRICT CONVENTIONS

- First District**
May 5 Owatonna #3723 @ 9:30 AM
- Second District**
April 28 Lakeville #210 @ 8:00 AM
- Third District**
April 14 Luverne #2757 @ 10:00 AM
- Fourth District**
April 21 Roseville #7555 @ 8:00 AM
- Fifth District**
April 22 Madison #1656
12 PM ** QM Class (ALL Welcome)
2:00 PM Convention Starts
- Sixth District**
April 28 Monticello #8731 @ 9:00 AM
- Seventh District**
April 14 Hopkins #425 @ 8:30 AM
- Eighth District**
April 27-29 Gilbert #4456 @ 9:00 AM
- Ninth District**
April 28-29 Fergus Falls #612 @ 10 AM



**Dave Scofield, Auxiliary
President Sixth District**

Greetings from the Sixth District.

We have our April District convention (Loyalty Days) at the Monticello Post #8731. On the agenda will be our memorial service, parade of flags and of course our district elections. We will be honored to have our Department Senior Vice President Patches Presfield as our Department Representative. We have a lot to cover and it will be a fun, productive meeting I am sure.

My wife Twyla and I were featured in an article in the VFW Auxiliary magazine and while they mixed up our President projects, it was fun to be recognized nationally and bring some notoriety to our state. Midwinter was a great time and a lot was accomplished. I believe the joint hospitality room with District 5 went well and hope you think so too. We will try it again for the department conference in June and if we get positive feedback, it may continue next year.

While we are behind on membership as a district, we have 5 auxiliaries over 100%. Thank you Princeton, McGregor, Monticello, Browerville and Watkins. We have 5 more over 95%. District 6 also mourns the loss of 2 Past District Commanders, Darrel Olson from McGregor and Chuck Venske from Wadena. They will be in our prayers.

My District testimonial will be on April 14th in Sauk Rapids at the VFW, with social hour starting at noon. Please come if it works for you.

I am also happy to announce that I am now a charter member of the VFW Riders club of the Monticello Post. See you all at the District Convention in Monticello April 28th.



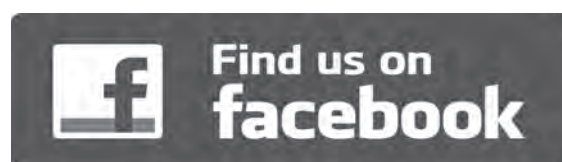
**Kathy Brockberg, Auxiliary
President Third District**

Greetings from the Third District.

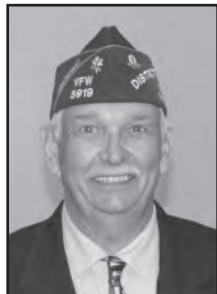
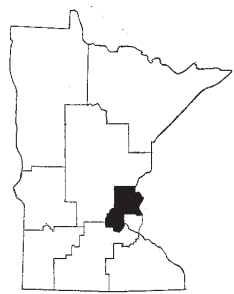
Our loyalty day district meeting will be held April 14 at Luverne with state guard Sonia Tatge as our representative. At this meeting, we will be electing and installing our officers for the coming year. We also will be setting up our program chairman's. Our district sewing project was doing cover-ups for the Luverne veterans home. We will donate them to the Luverne hospital chairman, Lois and Ann, at this meeting. My presidents project was music and memory. That donation will also be presented to the Luverne veterans home.

We have lost two auxiliaries, but are working hard to retain those members in our district and also trying to recruit new members. Our auxiliaries are also working on up coming poppy drives and memorial day plans. Though we are small in numbers, we will continue to work and serve our veterans.

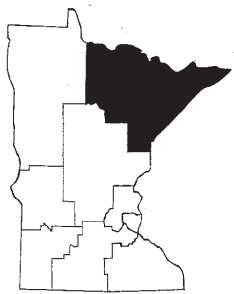
As a Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, you should take an Interest in the Dealings of YOUR Organization on the Post, District, Department and National levels. Attending Post, District, State Functions, like your Post Meetings would be a GOOD start.



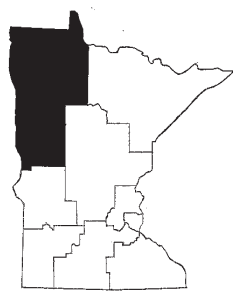
Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Minnesota



**Doug Johnson, Commander
Seventh District**



**Bill Kerzie, Commander
Eighth District**



**Louie Kamrowski, Commander
Ninth District**

Congratulations to Centennial for winning the 7th District Hockey Tournament on Sunday, March 11th. Best of luck at the State VFW tournament.

District 7 strongly supports Jerry Brletich for State Quartermaster at the Minnesota State VFW Convention in June.

I was chosen as the District membership winner in Minnesota to attend the Legislative Conference in Washington DC from March 4th to 8th. I also received a letter of appreciation from the National VFW Commander in Chief. It was an honor to meet our representatives in Washington DC as well as to hear the Commander in Chiefs testimony before the Congressional Committee.

It was great seeing everyone at the Joint Testimonial Dinner for me and the District Auxiliary President Doris Anderson.

As of Monday, March 12th we are currently in 4th place at 94.92 % we are currently .07% out of third place and .70 % out of first place. Currently District 1 is in first place at 95.62

Remember membership is everyone's responsibility. There are allot of veterans out there in the state and only 10 percent of the state's eligible veterans belong to the VFW. We need to recruit the younger veterans otherwise our membership will continue to decline along with our influence in Congress.

Please look at your posts past annual members which have not renewed and are now inactive. Please contact them by phone, email, letter or in person to ask them to renew their membership or find out from them why they let their membership expire. Some suggestions are to have a free meal for the members 1 hour before the monthly meeting. Thank you to all of the members that showed up for the Day on the Hill at the Minnesota State Capital on March 12th.

Thank you to everyone who showed up to dedicate the new buildings at the Minneapolis Veterans home on March 24th as well.

Post Quartermasters can now sign up or convert annual members to life members using the installment plan online providing that you have a valid email address for the member. National VFW sends an email to the member that the member has to reply back as accept or deny.

A reminder the next District meeting is the District Convention at Hopkins VFW on Saturday, April

Welcome to this edition of the Gopher Overseer from the Great Eight District. As this past extremely, cold winter is finally ramping down and Spring is in the air, we in the eight are ramping up for Loyalty Days.

Loyalty Days for the Eight District will be held this year at VFW Post 4456 Gilbert, MN, April 27th, 28th, and 29th. Along with the usual meetings, we will be hosting an informational talk by Judge Dale Harris about the newly formed Veterans Court system to deal with those returning Veterans suffering from PTSD. We also plan to host a Freedom Festival designed to make the younger people around our community aware of what our organization stands for.

This year's Veterans Day on the Hill was quite spectacular. The event had the largest turnout of Veterans ever. The Rotunda room was packed to standing room only. Major topics to be addressed were Permanent Homestead Market Value Exclusions for Surviving Spouses of 100 Percent Service Connected Disabled Veterans, Military Beneficiary's Pay or Benefit Protection and Military Veterans Job Tax Credit. The meeting rooms were also filled with standing room only. The veterans support at the event was very impressive.

February saw another fine feed at the Veterans Home in Silver Bay with Venison on the menu. Another great time was had by all and again, Thank You Ward Wallin and your Staff for a wonderful time there.

Now that I am headed towards the end of my tenure as District 8 Commander, I would like to thank all Post and Auxiliary membership who have worked so hard with me this past year to keep our district going strong. I would hope they will do the same for the next year's Commander. It has been an interesting experience being able to get involved with the inner workings of this great organization and meeting all the people who, in the Great state of Minnesota, manage it.

14th. This meeting starts at 0830 with the Joint Memorial Service.

Do not forget to donate to my Commander projects which are:

- Armed Forces Service Center at the Minneapolis International Airport
- Marine on the St Croix Veterans Camp and

Greetings from the Mighty North West Ninth District. Our very busy year is drawing to a close. I visited several posts in the district. But would liked to have visited many more.

I want to thank all my posts, district officers and chairman, and all members for the good work and timely reporting. You all helped make this a successful year. Our March meeting was in Perham on the 10th. Although some folks had trouble finding the location. We had a great turnout for both the V F W , and Auxiliary. Thanks to State Senior Vice Commander Tom Hanson for his good comments and information. We all learned that CELL numbers should be shared , and used as



**Diane Rux, Auxiliary
President Ninth District**

Greetings from the Mighty 9th

Here it is, just about to the end of our year. I'd like to thank our department officers for a great job keeping us informed of all the new updates this year.

Thank you Gail, for being a great friend and doing such an awesome job this year as Department Auxiliary President.

I'd also like to thank my line officers and chairmen for there work, sure couldn't have done my job without your help.

the numbers to call other members.

My last district meeting will be Loyalty Days April 28th, and 29th, in Fergus Falls. We will elect new officers. I wish them to have the best year of their lives. Post 612 Commander Mike and Auxiliary President Sharon have been working hard to put together an enjoyable time for all.

The State Hockey Tournament was in Moorhead March 23rd through the 25th. The ninth district team was East Grand Forks. They made it to fourth place. Congratulations to them, and all teams. It was a great Tournament. Thanks to Rod Berg for keeping us up to date on hockey.

Thanks to Crookston Commander Paula who has set up another Veterans Information Fair for April 6th. The one last fall was well attended by Veterans from both Minnesota and North Dakota.

I am looking forward to the State Convention in June. I encourage all who are able to attend this very important function. See you there. Travel safely always. Remember those who are serving our great country now, and all those who have served.

I also would like to be the first to congratulate all the incoming officers.

I'd like to thank Commander Louie, for a job well done for our great organization. It has been a wonderful year working with you.

Wishing you well in all levels of our organization for what you do for our Veterans.

Hope you all have a nice Loyalty Day weekend and a great meeting.

"Continuing Our Legacy For All Veterans And Their Families"

"Be Proud Thank A Veteran"



2018 - 2019 Voice of Democracy Theme

"Why My Vote Matters"

2018 - 2019 Patriot's Pen Theme

"Why I Honor the American Flag"

Entries are Due to Local V.F.W. Posts by October 31st, 2018



- Flags for Fort Snelling
- I send my thoughts and prayers to anyone currently in the hospital and wishing them a speedy recovery. I also send my condolences to anyone who may have lost a loved one or friend.



Don't forget to change your address back to Minnesota upon returning from the south.

Midwinter Banquet Highlights



Amanda Adams of Eagan High School is Teacher of the Year Grades 9-12. Sponsored by So. St Paul VFW Post #295 and Auxiliary.



Marc Reynolds of Wadena-Deer Creek Public Schools, Teacher of the Year for Grades 6-8, receives his award at the Midwinter Banquet. Marc was sponsored by Wadena Post #3922 and Auxiliary. Pictured left to right: State Commander Rick Bugbee, VFW National Representative PCIC Gary Kurpius, MN Auxiliary Americanism Chair Carol Kratz, Marc Reynolds, State Auxiliary President Gail Brekke, Auxiliary National Representative District Council Member Laurie Dale.



Jessica Ensminger of Agamim Classical Academy, is Teacher of the Year Grades K-5. Sponsored by Hopkins VFW Post #425 and Auxiliary.



State Commander Rick Bugbee and State President Gail Brekke accept donations from Posts and Auxiliaries during the Banquet Parade of Checks. All funds collected during their 2017-18 year in command will go toward the Minnesota Veterans Homes as their joint Commander & President's Project.



Voice of Democracy students enjoy their gathering before the Midwinter Banquet Awards Program. Pictures are taken with their families as well as VFW and Auxiliary Chairmen and Officers. Pictured left to right: Front Row- Josie Scholten, Isaac Maruyama, Madelyn Tangen, Emily Parker, Patriot's Pen Winner Noor Naseer. Back Row- Gabriel Dalhoff, Nolan Mattisan, Connor Kockler, Quinn Muhich, Logan Ledman.



Logan Ledman, 11th Grade, delivers his speech at the Midwinter Banquet after he was awarded First Place in the State. Logan is sponsored by First District- Eugene H. Truax VFW Post #4393 in Northfield.

To Read the Winning Speech visit:
www.mn.gov/vfw/youthsports2.html

THANK YOU!!

2017-18 STATE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY, PATRIOT'S PEN, and TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD SPONSORS

We would like to THANK everyone that took on the request for sponsorships. These valuable scholarships & awards are being presented to recognize their outstanding achievement in these nationally recognized scholarship and recognition competitions.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

- 1st place.....\$2,000.00
 Department of Minnesota VFW Charitable Association
- 2nd place..... \$1,000.00
 Co-Sponsorship: Three Diamond Corporation
 & Department of Minnesota VFW
- 3rd place..... \$600.00
 Hanson-Raabe VFW Post #4114, Spring Valley, MN
- 4th place..... \$500.00
 Betty Ann Heuer Memorial provided by Don Heuer
- 5th place..... \$100.00
 Gallagher-Hanson VFW Post #295, South Saint Paul, MN
- 6th place.....\$100.00
 Deer River VFW Post #2720, Deer River, MN
- 7th place.....\$100.00
 Prior Lake VFW Post #6208, Prior Lake, MN
- 8th place.....\$100.00
 Prior Lake VFW Post #6208, Prior Lake, MN
- 9th place..... \$100.00
 Department of Minnesota VFW

PATRIOTS PEN

- 1st place.....\$300.00
 Tony Gozola Memorial provided by the West Metro VFW
 Post #7051 in Crystal, MN.
- 2nd place..... \$200.00
 Department of Minnesota VFW Auxiliary
- 3rd place..... \$100.00
 Department of Minnesota VFW Auxiliary

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

- Grades 9-12.....\$300.00
 Betty Ann Heuer Memorial provided by Don Heuer
- Grades 6-8..... \$300.00
 Department of Minnesota VFW Auxiliary
- Grades K-5..... \$300.00
 Department of Minnesota VFW Auxiliary

CENTENNIAL OVERCOMES ADVERSITY TO WIN VFW STATE HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Friday March 23rd the Tournament opened with Dilworth VFW Post 1223 Color Guard presenting the Colors and the National Anthem.

GAME ONE:

Centennial (sponsored by Spring Lake Park VFW Post 6587 and the 7th District winner) vs Brainerd (sponsored by Brainerd VFW Post 1647 and the 5th/6th District winner). Centennial was the First Seed coming into the State VFW Hockey Tournament. Centennial scored the first two goals, with Brainerd scoring in the third period. Good game, Centennial advances onto the Semi-Final game winning 2-1.

GAME TWO:

East Grand Forks (sponsored by E. Grand Forks VFW Post 3817 and the 9th District winner) vs White Bear Lake (sponsored by White Bear Lake VFW Post 1782 and the 4th District winner). This was a Great game. Both Teams left it on the ice. In the third period, East Grand Forks prevailed, winning 2 - 1 and setting themselves up to face Centennial.

GAME THREE:

Rosemount (sponsored by Rosemount VFW Post 9433 and District 2/3 representative) vs Moorhead (sponsored by Dilworth VFW Post 1223 - Host Post). This was an interesting game. Rosemount seemed to dominate early in the game, but Moorhead is a tough team and they closed the gap on Rosemount a couple of times. It wasn't until the final minutes of the game, when Moorhead pulled their goaltender to get the equalizer... that's when the wheels fell off the bus. Rosemount wins 4 - 2 with an open net goal to end the game. Rosemount goes went on to the Championship side.

GAME FOUR:

Andover (sponsored by Coon Rapids VFW Post 9625 out of the 7th District, but representing the 1st District) vs Duluth East (sponsored by Duluth VFW Post 137 and the 8th District winner). From the get go, this was anyone's game. Duluth scored in the First period and held that lead into the Third period, when Andover tied the game up. It certainly looked like we would have our first Overtime game. BUT, with three seconds left on the clock, Duluth caught the Andover Goalie out of the net and punched in the winning goal. Duluth East goes onto face Rosemount in the Semi-final game winning 2-1.

Saturday, March 24, 2018 began with snow on the ground and a passing storm.



GAME FIVE:

Brainerd vs White Bear Lake. An good game to say the least. Both teams exchanged goals through the first two periods and into the Third period. Late in the Third period, with the score tied at 3 - 3, White Bear scored its fourth goal and held their end of the ice until the final buzzer. White Bear Lake wins 4 - 3 and moves on to the Consolation Game. Brainerd is the first team to go home. GREAT GAME!

GAME SIX:

Moorhead vs Andover. The first period ended with no score. In the second period, Andover scored on a nice pass to the opposite side of the net. In the Third period, Andover scored again. Moorhead returned the favor by stuffing a garbage goal by Andover's Goaltender. Andover held onto their lead for over four minutes. Andover wins 2 - 1 and will play White Bear Lake in the Consolation game.

GAME SEVEN:

Centennial vs East Grand Forks. Centennial established itself early in the game by scoring two goals in the First period and two goals in the Second period. Unfortunately, a Centennial player (#14) drew a Game Misconduct penalty in the Second period. It definitely slowed Centennial down for the remainder of the period. In the Third period, Centennial continued to draw 'major' penalties... with another player removed from the ice. East Grand Forks took advantage of Centennial's continuing misfortune and scored three unanswered goals. With about three minutes left in the



game, Centennial picked up the pace and kept the puck in East Grand Forks end of the ice. With less than a minute left, East Grand Forks pulled their Goalie. Centennial gained possession of the puck and skated the puck into an open net. Game ended 5 - 3 with Centennial going to the Championship Game. (A total two Game Misconducts for Centennial) Unfortunately, the Referee's decisions are FINAL... two of the Centennial Players did not play in the Championship game.

GAME EIGHT:

Rosemount vs Duluth East. Calmly and without a lot of effort Rosemount closes out the first two periods 3 - 0. Duluth East had their opportunities, but the Rosemount Netminder was up to the task. In the Third period, both teams worked the puck. With about two minutes left, Duluth East pulled their Goalie. Duluth East keep the pressure up and scored their only goal with about twenty seconds left in the game. Rosemount wins 3 - 1 and will play Centennial for the Tournament Championship.

Sunday, March 25, 2018, started out to be windy and a little miserable. Everyone was happy to be in the Arena for some Great Hockey.

CONSOLATION GAME:

White Bear Lake vs Andover. During the first two periods of the game, Andover showed their dominance in the goal scoring department by scoring five goals. White Bear lake obviously wanted to stay in the game and surprised the Andover Netminder with a goal of their own. Second period ended 5 - 1. The Third period was well played by both teams. A few penalties were awarded to both teams. With three seconds left in the game, Andover scored their sixth goal. Game ended 6 - 1 in favor of Andover and they are the 2018 VFW Bantam Hockey Tournament CONSOLATION winner.

THIRD PLACE GAME:

East Grand Forks vs Duluth East. Throughout the First and Second periods, both teams exchanged goals with East Grand Forks drawing first blood. With about two minutes

left in the Second period Duluth East went up by two goals. Two periods of good Hockey ending with Duluth East leading 4 - 2. In the Third period, East Grand Forks and Duluth East exchanged goals again. In the closing two minutes, East Grand Forks pulled their Goaltender. Duluth East took advantage of that and scored an open net goal. Game ended 6 - 3 and Duluth East is your VFW State Bantam Hockey Tournament Third Place winner.

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME:

Centennial vs Rosemount. Before the game even started, the 'tension' in the Arena was so thick, 'you could cut it with a hockey stick'! First two periods, both teams played good and clean Hockey. In the First period, Centennial jumped out to a two goal lead. They held that well into the Second period. About twelve minutes into the Second period, Rosemount scored their first goal. Period two ended 2 - 1 Centennial. About three minutes into the Third period, Rosemount got the equalizer and tied the game up. Some critical penalties took place late in the Third period. After regulation time, the game was tied 2 - 2. The game then went into overtime. About a minute into Overtime, Rosemount took a penalty for Interference... Less than a minute into the penalty, Centennial scored the WINNING OVERTIME GOAL!!! Game ended 3 - 2 and Centennial is your 2018 VFW State Bantam Hockey Tournament Champion!!! Needless to say and despite the previous day of controversy, this (as it should be) was the BEST game of the Tournament!!! Two Great Teams --- two fantastic Goaltenders!

First and foremost we would like to Thank Dennis Bushy for ALL his hard work and DEDICATION! Our Appreciation goes to the Moorhead Youth Hockey Association Parents and Players for their many Volunteer hours. A Special Thank You to Dilworth VFW Post 1223 and Auxiliary for hosting the 2018 VFW State Bantam Hockey Tournament and for their many Volunteer hours. We would especially like to THANK Shane Kvalevog for putting together the Tournament logo and Team Packets --- Great Job! We want to Thank State Commander Rick Bugbee, Past State Commander Dave Adams and 8th District Youth Activity Chairman for spending the weekend with us --- and presenting the Awards at the end of the Tournament.

All-in-all... A GREAT Tournament! Next year, we will be in Thief River Falls on March 22 - 24, 2019. Next year, the VFW State Bantam Hockey Tournament will be divided into two levels of play --- 'A' and 'AA'. Essentially two Tournaments.

Veterans / Youth Activities

2018 Pistol Competition Results

Article and Photos By Marc Persons



February 17, 2018: A Minnesota State VFW Pistol Shooting Competition was held in Brainerd. It was a joint effort between the Brainerd VFW and the Jenkins, MN, VFW.

2018 WINNERS

22 Caliber Class

- 1st Place- Ray Cowan, Post 3839, Jenkins...Score 337
- 2nd Place- Tommy Johnson, Post 246, Minneapolis... Score 323
- 3rd Place- Mike Williams, Post 1647, Brainerd... Score 321

Open Caliber Class

- 1st Place- Ray Cowan, Post 3839, Jenkins...Score 262
- 2nd Place- John Gieson, Post 5145, New Prague... Score 258
- 3rd Place- Chad Solheid, Post 7, Minneapolis...Score 252

Overall Trophy Winner:

Ray Cowan, Post 3839, Jenkins



Competition officials/range officers were Tex Stafford and Tim Brastrup (seen in yellow jackets) from the Jenkins VFW.



Fifteen shooters competed in 22 caliber and Open Class shooting. The event went off without a hitch. The most heard comment was they'd like to do it again next year.

Ladies from the Brainerd VFW Auxiliary prepared a great lunch for the hungry crew of about 30. A big thanks to the many volunteers involved.



YOUTH UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

VFW STATE BASEBALL

2018 State Tournament
August 8-12, 2018
Hosted by Marshall Post #742
2019 Hosted by Brainerd #1647

*Watch the
General Orders for
an Advertising
Opportunity
in the Baseball
State Tournament
Program Book*

VETERANS UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Bowling
April 7-8, 14-15, 2018 Alt. 21-22,
Hosted by Sauk Rapids #6992

Golf
Watch for Dates
2018 Hosted by
Austin Post #1216

Horseshoes
Watch for Dates
2018 Hosted by
White Bear Lake Post #1782

Trap shooting
Watch for Dates
2018 hosted by Austin Post #1216

Watch the
General Orders and
Next Gopher Oversea'r
for Opportunities to
Host an Activity
Bids are Accepted at
Fall Conference

CONV - from Page 7

Auxiliary members can participate in the Auxiliary Training Seminar a.k.a. ATS. Attendees will gain an understanding of how the Auxiliary functions and the many programs that are conducted. Training will also address the important MALTA system and Dues Transmittal system required to process membership.

The Gambling Seminar will again be held the afternoon of Friday, June 8th. Presented by a Minnesota Gambling Control Board specialist, this important session should be attended by all Gambling Managers and would be helpful to any gambling employees as well as Post Officers. Here you will learn about important guidelines and restrictions that can help Posts run successful, legal gam-

bling operations.

Whether you are a member or an officer, there is much to be gained in attending training.

FULL-CIRCLE

If you haven't attended a State Convention- You should. If you've been before- encourage those that haven't.

The State Convention has many aspects that outline the PROGRAMS of the V.F.W., follow the TRADITIONS of the V.F.W., and offer opportunity for SERVICE through the V.F.W. (During your stay, don't forget to take care of yourself by participating in a Rise & Shine Workout Friday or Saturday morning!)

We look forward to seeing you at the State Convention as we bring this year full-circle!



Logan Ledman, Minnesota Voice of Democracy Winner, escorted by State Auxiliary President Gail Brekke and State Commander Rick Bugbee during the Parade of Winners in Washington, D.C. on March 5, 2018.

2018 Buddy Poppy Distribution Begins

The dates for the 2018 Poppy Card and Poppy distribution have been announced. In the Metropolitan seven (7) county area Poppy Display Card Distribution will start on "FRIDAY, APRIL 20, 2018" at 12:01 a.m. with closed territories for ten (10) days. The distribution of Buddy Poppies will begin "Friday, MAY 18, 2017" at 12:01 a.m. with closed territories until Noon of May 19th. Poppy Distribution will last for one or two days, depending on each Post and Auxiliary.

Both Department Chairmen recommend that ALL Posts and Auxiliaries in the out-state area comply with these dates as close as possible. They also recommend that each Post and Auxiliary work closely with any and all American Legion or other VFW Posts in their area in or on the borders of their territories. By doing so, everyone will have a very successful 2018 Buddy Poppy Program. The State Poppy Chairmen ask that all Posts in the Seven County Metro area (Ramsey, Hennepin, Washington, Dakota, Carver, Anoka and Scott) contact their District Poppy Chairmen for details on Territorial borders.

Poppy chairmen are also encouraged to refer to the Department and District General Orders as well as the annual Poppy Kit produced by the VFW State Office. These items outline other details of the Annual Poppy Card and Poppy Days. NOTE that as of the 2017-18 year, Department Headquarters will no longer automatically mail the annual Poppy Kit to Commanders and Presidents.

Copies will be available to order at Fall Conferences and can be either emailed or hard mail via USPS upon request as of October each year.

It is also recommended that at the conclusion of your Post/Auxiliary Memorial Day Sale, that your Chairmen sit down and complete all Poppy Reports the same day and get them in the mail the next day. Of importance is the "Joint Poppy Report Form". This form is provided in the Poppy Kit and as of Spring 2018 will be available in the General Orders.

The Midwinter meeting also unveiled another Department of Minnesota VFW Buddy Poppy Display Card. This display card encourages the public to donate and to wear a VFW Buddy Poppy. This year's Card subtly highlights the American Flag and all that it stands for--- A 'gentle' reminder of why we stand and honor Old Glory.

All Posts are urged to purchase a number of these cards from Department Headquarters and seek donations from local merchants and ask them to display the cards in their businesses. These cards can also be used to get donations from patrons in Post Homes. Those display cards distributed within the Post Home can and should be displayed on the walls of Clubroom or Hall. They ARE NOT to leave the building.

All Posts and Auxiliaries should have their Poppy Orders submitted and received at this time. If you are still in need of Poppies or Display Cards, please contact VFW State Headquarters at 651-291-1757.

RAMP - from Page 5

believe there was an error; there can be a one-time request to have an informal conference by telephone. The request for an informal conference may delay this claim lane. Should there be a negative decision through the Higher-Level Review, the veteran can opt to go back into the Supplemental Claim Lane, thus playing a back and forth, but allowing the veteran to attempt to obtain even more evidence to strengthen their claim.

The final lane, which is currently unavailable, will be the Fast Track Lane. This will eventually allow the veteran the opportunity to forego the other lanes, and send their appeal issue directly to the Board of Veterans Appeals or elevate their appeal after the prior lanes have been exhausted. As with most new programs, there will surely be a pilot period for this option. Other than that potential, the VA is currently stating that this appeal track to the Board will not be implemented until February 2019.

There are certain criteria that are supposed to be met in order for the claimant to participate in RAMP. A Notice of Disagreement (NOD) must have been filed. A VA form 9, or Appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals, must have been submitted. That appeal must have been

certified to the Board, but not have been activated by the Board yet. Finally, participation can be allowed if the Board has remanded an appeal from the Legacy Appeal Process. If a compensation-related appeal has been certified to the Board and activated through the formal placement on the Board's docket, those appeals will remain pending within the current appeals process.

Should a veteran choose to Opt-In to RAMP, that appeal will no longer be processed through the Legacy Appeals route. Furthermore, if a veteran chooses to participate in RAMP and continues to receive an unfavorable decision, they cannot opt to revert back to the Legacy Appeals System.

Depending upon certain factors, the veteran may want to stay within the current appeal route they are in. For example, if the veteran has a docket date that is older it may behoove them to continue within the appeal system they are participating in.

The best advice that can be given, should a veteran receive a RAMP letter, is to contact their Veteran Service Organization. At that time all of the pros and cons can be weighed to see which option best fits their individual appeal issue(s).

Some of the recent statistics show that there has been an approximate 3% opt-in rate, and of those there has been a success rate of over 60%. The current numbers look promising for those who have participated, but time will tell as the program picks up speed and is inundated with more claims. As always if you receive notification regarding RAMP, we encourage you to reach out to this office if we represent you.

At that time we can give further guidance regarding it. Our number is (612) 970-5669.

Congratulations to all Posts that Entered a Poppy Display at the Mid-Winter Poppy Display Contest.

Many EXCELLENT Displays!

There were 23 Displays and a total of 16,048 Poppies used

The following were judged to be the State Winners:

Category I Public Promotion

- 1st Place: Post # 6316- Blaine, 7th District
- 2nd Place: Post # 3289- New York Mills, 9th District
- 3rd Place: Post# 4452- Cannon Falls, 1st District

Category II Memorial or Inspirational

- 1st Place: Post # 3723- Owatonna, 1st District
- 2nd Place: Post # 3979- Cloquet, 8th District
- 3rd Place: Post # 426- Minneapolis, 7th District

Category III Artistic or Decorative

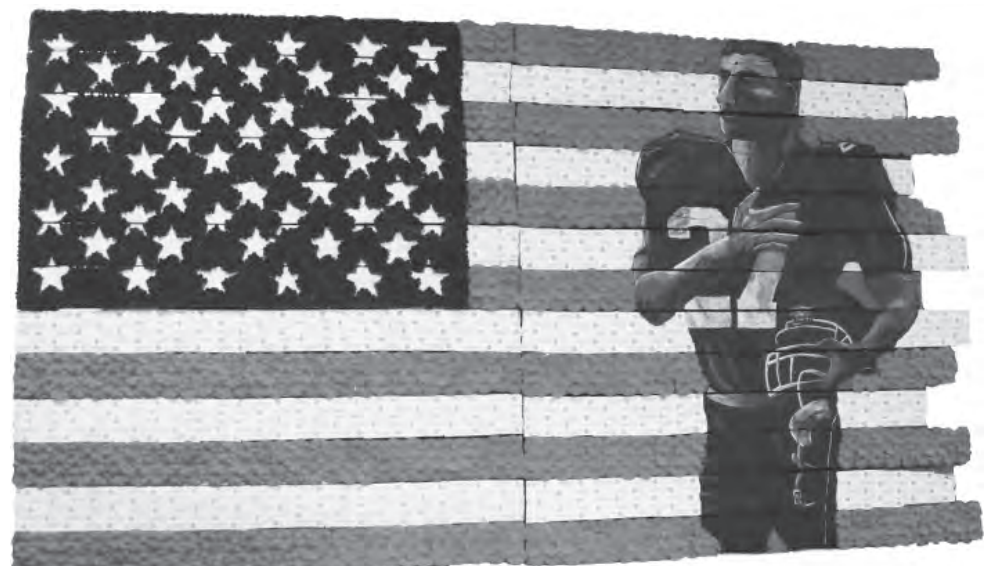
- 1st Place: Post # 6316- Blaine, 7th District
- 2nd Place: Post # 3915- Brooklyn Park, 7th District
- 3rd Place: Post # 906- Hutchinson, 2nd District

Category V Corsages and Centerpieces

- 1st Place: Post # 6316- Blaine, 7th District



Sampling of Buddy Poppy Display Entries from Midwinter 2018



Timely Tidbits

Letters to the Editor

Letter to Editor

In the midst of allowing his students to exert their First Amendment rights to discuss the issue of gun violence in schools, Jeffrey Erickson, Principal of Minnetonka High School, tread on the rights of taxpayers who fund his public school, the taxpayers. In an email of March 12, 2018, Mr. Erickson stated, "Please be advised: to maintain a confident level of security on our campus, access to this student-led event will be restricted to students and staff only. Parents, families and others should not plan to come to the high school to join the event as they will not be allowed access to the areas where students are congregating." He also stated that the protest would be occurring "outside of the West Entrance" of the high school, i.e. outdoors.

I responded to his email stating, "As a taxpayer and a disabled military veteran who fought to maintain the hard won freedoms of our nation's citizens, I strongly encourage MHS to provide the taxpayers, especially parents of the students, the right to attend this event, especially as it's occurring on public property. If you do not, First Amendment rights will be denied."

In his response to my email, Mr. Erickson stated, "This event is for students only for the reasons I've outlined in the email." While I understand his concern for the security of his students, there were police present at the protest and the protest occurred in the outdoors, outside a publicly-funded building. Mr. Erickson had no right to deny citizen taxpayers, especially those with students attending Minnetonka High School, the right to peacefully assemble in a public location. His actions were an obvious infringement of my rights and those of other citizen taxpayers who may have wanted to attend and peacefully to assemble. As a veteran, it's unsettling that leaders in our public schools are acting to limit the rights that veterans have fought and died to provide and protect, including for the students of Minnetonka High School.

Respectfully submitted,
 Bill Johnson Jr.
 Captain, Retired, US Army
 VFW Life Member #9648603, Hopkins Post 425
 Shorewood, MN

Life Member Turns 100



V.F.W. Life Member Lawrence Knowles turned 100 years old on January 24, 2018. Lawrence was honored for his 100th birthday at a celebration held at the Circles of Faith Church in Waubun on January 14. At that celebration, he was presented with a V.F.W. cap by Peter Domogalla, V.F.W. Post 1226.

Lawrence was in a tank unit in World War II and helped liberate most of Europe. He has been a member of the Wild Rice VFW Post #1226 Bejou for 70 years. He is very mentally alert, physically active and still lives in his home near Mahnommen with his 95 year old wife (and some help from his son).

Happy 100th Birthday Lawrence!

Auxiliary to Woodbury V.F.W. Post #9024 presented their donation of the book "America's White Table" to the Bayport Public Library.



Pictured left to right: Auxiliary Chaplain & Legislative Chair Vi W., Bayport Librarian Jill S., Auxiliary President Cynthia F.



How Many Cooties Did You Find? 71



Funeral Plans for Veterans

Purple Cross has been serving America's Veterans since 1948 and continues to offer the best funeral plans available. With **Funeral Preplanning** -you: • **protect your burial funds from nursing home expenses** • **Protect your family from financial burden in time of grief** • **gain peace of mind by knowing your funeral is taken care of.**

Yes, I would like to know more about:

- Traditional Funeral Cost Cremation Cost
 Payment Plan Options Discount Plans

For a free **Funeral Preplanning Cost Estimate**, please return this coupon to Purple Cross, 15116 Manitou Rd NE, Prior Lake, MN 55372 or call Jerry Albrecht at 952-226-6393. **Absolutely no obligation!**

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City/State: _____
 Phone: _____ Birth Date _____

WORD SEARCH #1

VFW & Auxiliary Positions

N W E N A J Q U Y P H K J S R N J F T I
 P S I N X J V U U R C B J Y I X E K R K
 A D J U T A N T A S A U U A T I P E U C
 S M I A L C Q X U R M T L H H Y T B S O
 T N E D I S E R P D T P E C Z A C B T N
 R E J Z O S G B E I A E N R T M O D E D
 E M Z D C E N P J H U I R S C Y A C E U
 R E J K O F A F C I R J Y M G E U P S C
 U E U N P R C E P E B J M H A F S E M T
 S R P C T Q D A D J U D G E U S B K Z R
 A O Y M H R R N D O M C G I G G T A H E
 E I E A B A A E D V Y B I W Y P U E F S
 R N B E Z M I X M X K Y U U J G O A R S
 T U R H M S E R V I C E O F F I C E R C
 M J V O G B J D M U G J I U X P P O Z D
 R M C S B J C W O A Y E J N J M Y M P S
 X O Q Y I G G M V X N N K A L R Y Z B F
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 T Z Q N O E L E K Q L D W H J U M U C J
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 D O M L Y C N R E O S P M T B Z G Z Z T

	Department	
Adjutant	Guard	Senior
Chairman	Judge	Service Officer
Chaplain	Junior	State
Claims	President	Surgeon
Commander-In-Chief	Quartermaster	Treasurer
Conductress	Secretary	Trustee

"Preserving and Extending Veterans Rights, Advocating a Strong National Defense, Promoting Patriotism and Serving Local Communities" - Veterans of Foreign Wars Founding Principles



MINNESOTA VFW CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION

Expanding and Preserving the Programs of the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars for the Present and the Future!



The Veterans of Foreign Wars has been 'fighting' for Veterans since 1899. We have worked endlessly to gain the Benefits and Entitlements that Our Veterans deserve. For over 116 years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has spent millions of dollars and hours to Educate our Youth and build our Communities in the areas of Patriotism, Americanism and those things that are RIGHT for the United States of America. The members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars have placed their 'bodies and minds' between the enemies of this Great Nation to preserve the American way and the FREEDOM of not only the United States, but other nations as well.

With that said, the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars Charitable Association (MN VFW Charitable Association) is asking that you remember this Sacrifice through your Gift Giving and Donations.

There are a number ways that you can Preserve the Memory of the Sacrifices of our Veterans for now and the future:

- Using the form below, Donate to the VFW Charitable Association.
- * Establish a monthly or annual deduction to the MN VFW Charitable Association from your checking account or credit card.
- * Designate your Donation to a Charitable Trust in the name of the MN VFW Charitable Association.
- * Establish a Charitable Gift Annuity to the

- MN VFW Charitable Association.
- * Simply make a donation to the MN VFW Charitable Association.
- * Donate to the VFW Outdoor Fund.
- * Donate through the MN VFW Charitable Association Annual Raffle Calendar.

We certainly Appreciate the Consideration of the MN VFW Charitable Association in your Gift Giving Plans. Your Donation will ensure the future of the Programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

For more information, please contact the Secretary of the MN VFW Charitable Association at 651-291-1757 or email us at vfwmn@aol.com or by writing to: VFW Charitable Association, 20 W. 12th St., Room B-5, St. Paul, MN 55155

The MN VFW Charitable Association is a 501-c-3 Charitable Organization under IRS Code.



Mail your Donation to: MN VFW Charitable Association, Rice Street Station, P.O. Box 17146, St. Paul, MN 55117



Please send more information about the MN VFW Charitable Association, its purpose and Programs.

____ Please accept my Tax Deductible Donation of: \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 Other: ____

Would you like to be an ANNUAL Donor? _____ (Yes or No)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Earmark for one of the following: _____ General Un-designated

____ VFW Outdoor Fund _____ Veterans Service _____ VFW Programs

Remembering the Sacrifices of Our Fellow Comrades- Makes Every Day...

Buddy Poppy Day!!!

Camp Ripley Run "2"

This is a Charity Motorcycle Run to help the Disabled Veteran Deer and Turkey Hunts at Camp Ripley

June 30, 2018

The 'Camp Ripley Run' is a Charity Motorcycle Ride from Jenkins VFW Post 3839 in Jenkins, Minnesota to Camp Ripley. The purpose of the Ride is to raise funds for the Annual Disabled Veterans Deer and Turkey Hunts. The Deer Hunt takes place in October and the Turkey Hunt in the first part of May. These hunts are free to the Disabled Veterans that participate in the hunts. Most of these Veterans would rarely have a opportunity like this to hunt Deer or Turkey aided by guides or partners. It is a Very Special event for these American Heroes.

The 'Camp Ripley Run' is scheduled for July 30, 2018. Registration will start between 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM (depending on how bad you need a cup of coffee and a Roll). We hope to have kickstands up about 11:30 AM..

Once we reach Camp Ripley, Riders will enjoy a Tour of the Camp Ripley Military Museum. Lunch and refreshments available after the ride (Site TBD). More details will be available as we get closer to the Ride Date.

The Registration (donation) fee will be \$15 for riders and \$10 for passengers. This will be collected at the Registration point in Jenkins.

If your Club, Group or Organization plan on doing this Ride, please send us an email so we can plan for your participation. Tell them about this very worthwhile event. This Ride needs the help of Groups, Clubs and Riders!

For more information or details about the Camp Ripley Hunts, please email Jim Hesselgrave at vfwmn@aol.com more information will soon be available on Webpage: www.mn.gov/vfw under the VFW Riders page.

June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress established an official flag for the new nation. **RED** symbolizes hardiness and valor, **WHITE** symbolizes purity and innocence, and **BLUE** represents vigilance, perseverance and justice.

**When the flag is raised or lowered as part of a ceremony, and as it passes by in parade or review, everyone, except those in uniform, should face the flag with the right hand over the heart.*

Poppy Day is _____ 2018

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.A. and Auxiliary

Department of Minnesota Post # _____

They're Serving NOW, Please Remember Them! — Wear A

V.F.W. BUDDY POPPY

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