

GOPHER OVERSEAS

Volume 77, NO. 3

Official Publication of the Veterans of Foreign Wars - Department of Minnesota Celebrating 100 Years 1921-2021

October 2023 - January 2024

Midwinter Conference Jan. 12-14, 2024

By Cheryl Burton, Department Office Manager

The Department of Minnesota's Annual Midwinter Conference has a great deal in store for all members that attend. If you have never been to a Midwinter Conference, this would be the year whether you come for the whole weekend or just Saturday.

The event will be held Friday, January 12 through Sunday, January 14, 2024. The Marriott NW in Brooklyn Park has free parking. If you have not purchased your banquet ticket or reserved your room, please do this at your earliest convenience as time is going by quickly and the Conference will be here before you know it. We will have four \$50 Raffle drawings during the Banquet, please fill out your raffle ticket when you

register at the Northland Foyer for both VFW and Auxiliary. You must be present to win.

During the Conference, the VFW will welcome Quartermaster General Mark Garduno and the Auxiliary will host their National Chaplain, Donna Mills.

There will be three new seminars introduced on Saturday, January 13th Saturday afternoon. The new Department Adjutant/Quartermaster Barry Henriksen will be holding office hours for any questions you may have with Dashboard/Community Service/log in issues and audits. Bring your questions, he will be there to help in any way he can to move your post forward.

One of the new Seminars will be held on Saturday morning with a guest speaker from MN Dept. of Veterans Affairs "Mental Health with a focus on SAD and Suicide prevention". This seminar is a JOINT session and will be held in the Northland Ballroom. We have an exciting seminar taught by QMG Marc Garduno. Though it is a nonprofit workshop for Commanders and Quartermasters, it is open to the Auxiliary. This workshop consists of roundtable style discussion on various topics that can negatively affect non-profit organizations like VFW Posts.

MIDWINTER - Cont. on Page 7



**2023-2024
State Commander
Dan Meyer**

Member of
VFW Post 8459
Fairfax, MN

What a great time to be a veteran. As the holidays approach, remember, we must take care of each other. The days are short, and the nights are long and cold. This is a good reason to do buddy checks just to make sure everyone is good. The longer periods of darkness can lead to increased mental health issues.

At the Midwinter Conference, we will have a great opportunity to learn how to properly check on everyone's mental health. There will be a class on mental health provided by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Midwinter Conference will also give us the opportunity to see and hear the thoughts of today's youth in their responses on the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen essay contests. There are some very talented young people in Minnesota. Let's give them the support that they deserve at the Midwinter Banquet.

In the not-too-distant future (April 10, 2024), we will have a special event - Hats on the Hill. This is our opportunity for all veterans to come together for a day of fellowship and to let our local legislators know what the veterans have done for this country. We are not just looking for a

COMMANDER - Cont. on Page 9

Tomb Trek 2024

By Todd Roberts, MOC Grand Sr. Vice Commander

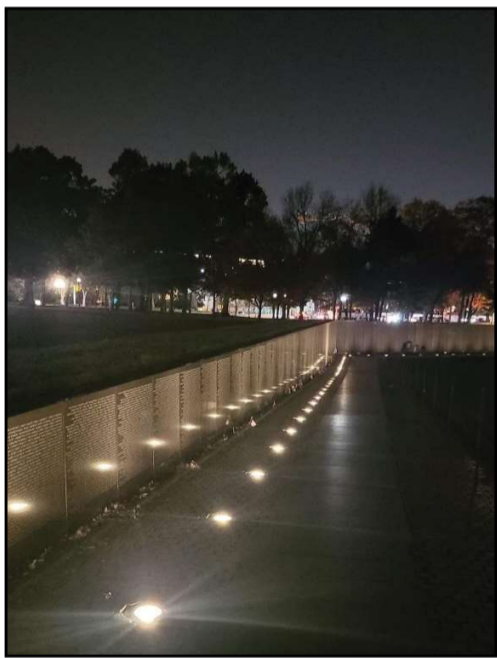
The Military Order of the Cootie (MOC) has gathered once a year for over 88 years to pay tribute to those who answered the call of our nation at the Tomb of the Unknown, Arlington National Cemetery. This year, the MOC was on site November 3-5. The placing of wreaths occurred on Sunday, November 5. Each year a maximum of 450 wreaths are presented at the Tomb of the

Unknown and the Argonne Cross by units of the Military Order of the Cootie.

Arlington National Cemetery will always be a place of hallowed memories and a shrine of each patriot's devotion.

The Department of Minnesota Color Guard team is also the

TOMB TREK - Cont. on Page 11



Pictured above: a night view of the Wall That Heals, Washington, D.C.



Pictured above: the MOC Grand (State) Commander Tim Arnold, MOC Supreme Color Guard members: Jarrod McReynolds, Gary Anderson, Bill Manor, Dennis Maddox, Jim Dalziel, Curt Hermanson, Ed Eibon, Dewey Hermanson, Doug Doerfler, and MOC Grand (State) Sr. Vice Commander Todd Roberts

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

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Twin Cities, MN
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Save The Date!!

Midwinter Conference January 12-14, 2024 Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park	Minnesota Veterans Day on the Hill April 10, 2024 St. Paul	VFW U15A Girls State Hockey Tournament March 8-10, 2024 Elk River
National Legislative Conference March 3-7, 2024 Washington, D.C.	VFW Boys State Hockey Tournament February 9-11, 2024 Alexandria	State Convention & Training Schools June 13-16, 2024 Kahler Grand Hotel Rochester

Upcoming VFW Events
****Red Events are Department Events****

Top News

MN VFW Members Receive National Appointments

CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER!

Every year, each Department Commander has the option to recommend to the VFW National Commander Tim Borland members of the MN VFW for consideration to National VFW Appointments for the year 2022-2023.

These recommendations are made to recognize individual members that have toiled in the background on behalf of the VFW and may never have been recognized for their efforts. They are as follows:

National Deputy Chief of Staff

Robert Krominga, Post 1782
Jeffery Kronback, Post 950

National Assistant Inspector General

Lawrence Grindland, Post 295
Sean Gustafson, Post 7555

National Special Aide-de-Camp

David Daniels, Post 1791
Timothy Kent, Post 2735
Jason Oxley, Post 6992

National Aide-de-Camp

Russell Bentley, Post 1221
Christian Borle, Post 1647
James Doten, Post 494
Justin Frogner, Post 1782
Curtis Hermanson, Post 4452
Joel Kvilvang, Post 1720
Arlyn Lamb, Post 7662
Jayme Lee, Post 1782
Jerome Ludwig, Post 2553
Lowell Lyman, Post 5727
James McCloden, Post 246
Nathan Pike, Post 4114
Louis Plevell, Post 1210
Troy Stegora, Post 8731
Ronald Stigers, Post 3979
Melvin Svenson, Post 1350
Ralph Talerico, Post 137

National Reps Visiting at Midwinter Conference



Marc Garduno was elected Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States on March 21, 2022, by special election of the National Council of Administration.

Prior to his election, he held appointed positions as VFW Assistant Quartermaster General and served as a member of the VFW National Legislative Committee and the National Bylaws Study Group.

Marc retired from the U.S. Army after 20 years as a chief warrant officer (CW3), human resources technician, and his assignments included several tours in the Republic of Korea, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and the Joint Readiness Training Center headquartered in Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas.

After retiring from the Army in 2008, he held various civilian sector management positions to include several years as a project manager for a Department of Defense contracting company with service at the Joint Personnel Effects Depot, Dover Air Force Base, Delaware.

He and his wife live in Kansas City, Kansas.



Donna Mills of Hesston, Pennsylvania, was elected to the office of National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) Auxiliary at its 110th National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. She is now in the third of five offices leading to the National Presidency, which she is expected to hold in 2026-2027.

A Life Member of the Standing Stone Auxiliary 1754 in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, she has served the organization in many capacities including Auxiliary, District and Department President, National District Council Member, Eastern Conference Membership Coach and Veterans & Family Support National Ambassador.

Donna is a retired software engineer for Pennsylvania State University where she worked for 28 years. She spends much of her spare time indulging in her love of computers and computer programming, reading, watching football and creating cross-stitch and embroidery. She is also a member of Military Order of the Cootie Auxiliary (MOCA) 33.

Update on New MN Veterans Homes

By Lynn Sadoff, MN Department of Veterans Affairs

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) is proud to be opening new Homes to better serve our Veterans, their families and communities. Our goal is to ensure that Veterans are admitted as soon as possible to a highly satisfying, engaging and safe facility. However, the opening of three new Veterans Homes in Bemidji, Montevideo and Preston is a complex process and has recently been delayed.

Construction delays on large-scale projects are not uncommon; in this case, specifications have to be met exactly in order to ensure we meet the standards of the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Federal VA. Both organizations will inspect the new facilities prior to and/or upon opening.

The Home's construction reaches what is called "substantial

completion" when MDVA assumes ownership of the property. Substantial completion is expected by mid-November for Preston and late November for Montevideo and Bemidji.

At this time, we expect that Resident admissions could begin in mid-December for Preston and mid-January for Bemidji and Montevideo.

Once the Certificate of Occupancy is obtained, informal tours/open houses will be offered to small groups of community stakeholders and future Residents and their families.

A formal Grand Opening/Dedication Event is expected in spring 2024 to allow for warmer weather.

More information can be found at:

<https://mn.gov/mdva/homes/>

Minnesota VFW Office Locations

Department Headquarters:

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20 West 12th Street
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Webpage: www.vfwmn.org

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Jon Gohn, Claims Director
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1 Federal Drive
St. Paul, MN 55111
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Fax: (612) 970-5404

Auxiliary Headquarters :

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Fax: (651) 291-7932

Minneapolis VA

Jeffrey Cowell
VFW Hospital Representative
Minneapolis VAMC
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Phone: (612) 725-4448

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Publications Committee:
Dan Meyer, Commander; David Staehlin, Sr. Vice Commander;
Edward Keogh, Jr. Vice Commander; Charles Hawkins, Judge Advocate;
Ken Schroepfer, editor

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

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2023-2024 Department Officers

Senior Vice Commander

By David Staehlin, State Senior Vice Commander

Greetings Comrades, Brothers, and Sisters! We're well into Autumn and have had a touch of snow in some areas of the state. I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving.

As your State Senior Vice Commander, I've been keeping busy chairing the Internal Affairs Committee; attending District and Commander's Task Force meetings; and connecting with Post and District Commanders and other leaders across the state.

As has been the practice, I've also been meeting periodically and keeping in touch with other Department Senior Vice Commanders and Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt. We've been sharing best practices and preparing for next year. The amount of planning and coordination throughout the VFW is amazing.

Sharing what I've been doing as Senior Vice Commander is a reminder that ideally, Junior Vice Commanders and Senior Vice Commanders at all levels are simultaneously working towards the success of the current year and learning and planning for their advancement and service as Commander.

Membership remains as critical as ever. Due to the passing of members and some non-renewals,

we're constantly needing to target 102% membership or higher. We can no longer afford to aim for or be satisfied with 100%.

Please continue to hold recruiting events, which allow us to both educate the public on what we do for veterans, their families, and our communities and also to recruit new members for the VFW and our Auxiliary.

Both VFW and Auxiliary members are eligible to be awarded the VFW recruiter pins for 1, 5, 10, or 15 new or reinstated VFW members recruited. Be sure to list the recruiter's name and membership number on the VFW membership application. VFW members who recruit will then be automatically tracked. The Post Commander will need to notify the VFW Membership Department in May or June of any Auxiliary members who recruited VFW members and the number recruited.

Thank you all for your membership and for supporting your VFW and Auxiliary.

If we can be of any assistance, please don't hesitate to contact the VFW Department Headquarters at 651-291-2753, or contact Department officers directly.

Adjutant-Quartermaster

By Barry Henriksen, Department Adjutant-Quartermaster

Here's to hopes for a short, dry winter. And not just for our Arizona Snowbirds! As we enter the holiday season, I am thankful for so many things.

We will have the honor of having National Quartermaster General Marc Garduno as our Midwinter National Rep. Not only will he bring greetings, but he will be giving a riveting seminar on Saturday. You won't want to miss it. He will tell all of us how to stay on the straight and narrow with our charitable status. Marc Garduno presents a dynamic seminar with facts and humor.

I can't wait for the Midwinter Banquet to meet the nine Voice of Democracy District winners, the Patriots Pen state winner, and the three Citizen Education Teachers of the Year! Thank you to all of them, their families, and our judges. It will be a great evening. Don't miss out, order your banquet tickets today!

I want to thank all of you for electing me to serve you as Department Quartermaster. I have enjoyed these first few months very much. In fact, you will all be the first to know that I am running for reelection! I have learned a lot, but I have a lot still to learn. I am so lucky to work with a great team at the office

and our officers.

Thank you to all the Past Department Commanders for your friendship and mentorship. I hope to see all of you at Midwinter (possible exception of snowbirds) in January. You are such an asset to our organization.

Thank you to all the posts that have ordered Poppies. But less than half of posts have done so. I know the price has gone up, but they are still a bargain. They are an integral part of your Relief Fund. Please order soon. And remember the new option of the Tin Poppy. It is not replacing the traditional poppy, but is a fun alternative, and cheaper.

Most of all I want to thank my family for their support. My wife Kris has supported my VFW adventure from day 1. I am very fortunate. Over the Thanksgiving holiday I will be driving down to Fort Huachuca AZ to help my son and his wife. He is reporting there for the Army Intelligence Officer Basic Course. Much like your family, service continues in my family. That is why what we do in the VFW is so important.

From my family to yours, I say thank you for all that all of you do.

Junior Vice Commander

By Ed Keogh, State Junior Vice Commander

This year is moving very fast. We had great training at our Fall Convention in Rochester. Please make sure you attend future training sessions to be able to better serve your Posts, Community, Schools, Veterans and Active Military.

The new way to submit Community Service Reports was a challenge for some Posts in the beginning of year this. We came a long way with training, phone calls, and emails to help everyone get on the right path for reporting. Make sure your Post submits reports at least Community Service Report per quarter or better yet one every month. There are deadlines for each quarter which have been sent out via Eblast memos. Remember that Community Service Reports are joint reports between Posts and Auxiliaries. If your Auxiliaries have been sending in Community Service Reports in the

past, have an Auxiliary member get together with a line Officer and work together to submit reports.

During my travels throughout the State of MN visiting Posts and Districts I am still finding that not all Posts and Auxiliaries meet on the same date and/or at the same place. How can you work together if you do not meet and communicate with each other? Please change your meetings to meet at the same time and place and hold a joint meeting prior to your respective business meetings. If this is not possible send a representative from your Post to your Auxiliary meetings and ask your Auxiliary to send a representative to your Post meetings to be able to communicate and work with each other.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me or another Department Line Officer to assist you.

Judge Advocate

By Charles Hawkins, Sr., State Judge Advocate

Greetings Comrades, Brothers and Sisters. Well, the last time we were all together was the Fall Conference. I had such a great time visiting with everyone. I can't wait for the opportunity to meet more of my comrades at the Midwinter Conference.

Since I have been the Department Judge Advocate, our Commander, Sr. Vice, Jr. Vice, Quartermaster, and office staff have been advising me and providing me with all sorts of information. They have given me many suggestions on what to expect over the rest of this year.

We have done some traveling together. We have been to the National Convention in Phoenix, AZ., where I received more information on the inner workings of the VFW. The weather there was 110 degrees or more every day. On one of the 100+ days, a sandstorm started that evening. It was so bad that I could not even see the buildings across the street from the hotel. After that it

started to rain. I mean pour! It was a regular monsoon.

There was one more great trip where we all went to the Big Ten Conference in Itasca, Ill. While there, I had a chance to meet with the leaders of neighboring departments. Another fantastic learning experience.

In my travels within Minnesota, I've been to several district meetings. My plan is to visit with more of you at your district meetings.

In just over a month, we will be having our Midwinter Conference. There are going to be some wonderful classes so come prepared to really learn something.

Make sure you get your hotel reservations made and your Banquet tickets ordered soon. Remember, it's always first come, first served.

Lastly, near and dear to my heart are the Buddy Poppies. Make sure that you read the information printed about the cost of the Poppies and Poppy Cards. Pay when you order them.

VFW National Home

By Curt Hermanson, Chairman National Home

Members of the MN VFW and Auxiliary attended the National Home MO/WI Fall Festival. On Friday October 27, members were present for the ground breaking ceremony for the National Commander's and President's joint project. A delicious pork chop dinner was prepared that evening at Charlotte MI VFW#2406. On Saturday October 28, members attended the annual meeting of life members where outgoing District 9 trustee Steve VanBergen was presented a plaque for his years of

service and newly elected trustee District 9 Wendy Dannenfelzer was installed. 2020-21 Past Department Commander Curtis Hermanson was finally able to present the 50 quilts donated by the District 6 auxiliary back in 2021. This was delayed due to COVID. The quilts were distributed at the Halloween Party held for the 150 residents of the National Home, 93 of which are children. Of the 42 homes at the National Home, 41 are full and one is being renovated.

Minnesota Auxiliary News



**STATE PRESIDENT
VFW Auxiliary**

Dave Scofield

Member of
VFW Post 2818 Auxiliary
Litchfield, MN



National District Council

By Frankie Bill, Member Area E

Comrades and Members, the National organization has been incorporating feedback and continuing to operate with full transparency. For the first time, members are able to view the approved 2023-24 VFW Auxiliary National Budget and Standing Rules online. They are posted behind the MALTA login under [Member Resources](#) and within the [Miscellaneous Resources](#). This was approved during the 110th VFW & Auxiliary National Convention by the 2023 National Council of Administration for all VFW Auxiliary members in good standing to have access to these documents. Also posted on the website, you will find more and more resources at your fingertips. For example, the 2024 National VFW Auxiliary Bylaws & Ritual are now available. They are located in the middle of the 2023-

24 VFW Auxiliary National Program Book and Building on the VFW Auxiliary Foundation.

For many, this can be an exciting and festive time of year. We take time to connect with our families and friends, recognize and honor Veterans, and celebrate communities during this holiday season. This is a time where we prepare to recognize the youth in our communities for their participation in programs, such as Scholarships, Youth Activities, and Americanism. Each year, I look forward to the VFW & Auxiliary Midwinter Conference where Minnesota students, educators, and community leaders will be awarded for their audio essays, patriotic writing, and dedication to educating future talent.

Be well and stay safe. Thank you Veterans and members for being YOU!

Greetings VFW and Auxiliary Members.

Four months into the year and we are focusing on our programs and membership. Because no one wants to see me in a skirt if we aren't ahead of the post side by the end of June.

The Fall Conference in Rochester was a great training opportunity for everyone. We got through a lot of business and wrapped it up with a fun banquet also. It was great to be able to host our National Representative Frankie Bill and show her off to our post side.

December will bring out our poppy program with contests in many districts. We all look forward to seeing those entries and are amazed at everyone's creativity.

We look forward to seeing our Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen winners at our Midwinter Conference

in Brooklyn Park January 12-14. It's an exciting tradition to get dressed up and hear the speeches from the kids. We have done so well nationally the last couple of years; I hope we do as well this year.

On Friday we will have our Council of Administration meeting and a big surprise for everyone is that our National Representative will be Donna Mills, our National Chaplain.

Saturday, continuing with our "Together we Can" theme, we will have two joint training sessions. First on mental health awareness and second on computer basics with Jarrod McReynolds.

The banquet this year will be all for the kids and no parade of checks for our special project this year. Trying to make changes as we learn and grow.

Auxiliary Membership Applications

When filling out a membership application for a new or rejoining member please make sure the applicant fills out all needed information including name of campaign ribbons/medals, Foreign Service dates and location of service..

The investigating Committee shall make careful investigation of the facts set forth in the application,

shall see proof of honorable service of the eligible veteran, unless he/she is a member of the VFW post to which the applicant is applying for membership.

Signatures of at least two (2) persons who served on this committee are necessary (they MAY NOT be the person that recruited the member.

Treasurer/Secretary Chair

By Laurie Dale

Greetings everyone.

Per the voting of the Delegates at the 2023 National Convention:

1. Department Secretaries may now update changes in the Treasurers position in MALTA. The requests to change the Treasurer no longer need to be sent into the VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters Office.
2. The Office formerly known as Conductress/Conductor will only be known as Conductor.
3. Conduct unbecoming a member in their relations to the VFW Auxiliary or the VFW organization or any member(s) thereof is now a part of the Discipline Section 1102 of the National Bylaws. National says quite simply "Be kind & polite or be quite."

The new MALTA Bookkeeping Application is now available. You will find the link on your MALTA Dashboard – all the way to the right-hand side of the shortcuts at the top of your DUTIES page. Auxiliaries are NOT REQUIRED to use this application; it was developed to make the Treasurer's job easier. The system developed specifically for the VFW Auxiliary is similar to QuickBooks and is quite user friendly. It will make reporting easier each month and will

assist in giving your Trustees some of the information they need for their quarterly audits. There is a USER GUIDE available in MALTA. This application is only available to the Treasurer.

National still requests two (2) dollars per member for the Cancer Grant Program to keep it viable. This is NOT a requirement; an auxiliary can give as it wishes. The last balance given for that account at the National Council Meeting was in excess of Sixty (60) Million dollars. FYI.

The VFW Auxiliary has twelve (12) programs to participate in. It IS NOT required to participate in all of them. National would rather have your VFW Auxiliary do one (1) or two (2) programs very well than all of them halfheartedly. There is NO REQUIREMENT to be 100% participation or reporting on ANY level.

According to the National Bylaws Section 812 – It is permissible to secure typed or computer-generated minutes in the permanent book or insert in a three-ring binder or clip folder. Each minute page of the minutes shall be numbered consecutively and provide a space for the Trustees to initial at audit.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to all.

All Post, District and Department Officers Dues

MUST BE PAID by December 31

ALL MEMBERS

REMEMBER TO PAY YOUR DUES

Better yet,

Become a Life Member !!

MN Auxiliary Office Hours

Monday - Thursday 8am - 4pm
Phone: (651) 291-1759

email: treasurer@vfwamn.org or secretary@vfwamn.org
Personal emails, phone numbers, messaging systems/apps of our Office
Staff will not be used for Auxiliary business.

Claims and Service Office Report

By Jon Gohn, Claims Director

VA Covers Cost of Parkinson's for Families of Lejeune Veterans

November 10, 2023

WASHINGTON — Today, VA announced that family members of Veterans exposed to contaminated drinking water at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune from Aug. 1, 1953 to Dec. 31, 1987 are now eligible for reimbursement of health care costs associated with Parkinson's disease under the Camp Lejeune Family Member Program.

These family members are also eligible for health care reimbursement for esophageal cancer, lung cancer, breast cancer, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, leukemia, multiple myeloma, renal toxicity, miscarriage, hepatic steatosis, female infertility, myelodysplastic syndromes, scleroderma, neurobehavioral effects, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

"Veterans and their families deserve no-cost health care for the conditions they developed due to the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune," said VA's Under Secretary for Health Dr. Shereef Elnahal, M.D.

"We're proud to add Parkinson's to the list of conditions that are covered for Veteran family members, and we implore anyone who may be living with this disease — or any of the other conditions covered by VA's Camp Lejeune Family Member Program — to apply for assistance today."

Veterans who served at Camp Lejeune are also eligible for no-cost Parkinson's health care and other VA benefits. Recent studies have also shown that the risk of Parkinson's disease is 70% higher for Veterans stationed at Camp Lejeune.

Thanks to the PACT Act, the biggest expansion of Veteran health care and benefits in generations, Veterans and their families can also now file lawsuits for harm caused by exposure to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune. To apply for health care reimbursement under the Camp Lejeune Family Member Program, visit the program website. To apply for Veteran benefits related to Camp Lejeune, visit VA.gov/CampLejeune.

New Survey Lists top Challenges When Transitioning Out

November 9, 2023

GEORGETOWN, Texas — It takes seven months for veterans to feel they've adapted to civilian life after active duty, new research suggests.

A new survey of 1,000 U.S. military veterans revealed there are an average of three different major challenges on this journey.

Finding a job topped the list, with a third (33%) of respondents calling it their biggest hurdle. Other challenges included parting ways with their friends in the military and finding a purposeful career (28% each).

Conducted by OnePoll on behalf of Sport Clips Haircuts for its VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" program, the survey also found that six in 10 (60%) veterans already had long-term goals in mind after leaving the military.

These goals included finding a purposeful civilian job (56%), homeownership (52%), and getting married and having children (46%).

"From serving their country to serving their communities, veterans bring an array of transferable skills to their civilian careers," said Gordon Logan, founder and chairman of Sport Clips, and Air Force veteran. "While a meaningful job and career were a top goal for many, they may not have always been aware of all the resources available to help support them in their journey. It's important to ensure the next generation of veterans knows about support programs and other services offered by veterans' organizations such as the VFW."

Some also noted milestones they had yet to experience when they left the military, such as pursuing higher education or a college degree (27%).

One in five (20%) revealed they had never created a resume at that point in time.

While the military taught many transferable skills, such as the ability to perform under pressure (50%), teamwork and collaboration (41%)

and problem-solving (39%), it took an average of four months for veterans to find a civilian job.

To help boost their self-confidence during the adjustment to civilian life, a third of veterans (33%) took classes or continued their education.

Twenty-nine percent also credit their partner or spouse with helping them transition after their service.

Additionally, veterans shared their biggest tips in transitioning to civilian life, including taking your time to get adjusted, keeping a daily routine, starting to save your money before leaving the military, and continuing your education.

"One in five veterans polled said a lack of funds prevented them from pursuing their educational goals," Logan added. "Whether they're a first-time college student or continuing their education, the Help A Hero scholarship program gives service members and veterans can get the assistance they need to further their studies without incurring excessive debt."

Veterans' Biggest Non-Health-Related Challenges in Transitioning to Civilian Life

- Finding a job - 33%
- Parting ways with my friends in the military - 28%
- Finding a purposeful career - 28%
- Absence of familiar routine/structure - 23%
- Pursuing educational goals - 15%
- Adjusting to providing basic necessities (e.g., food, clothing, housing) - 15%
- Lack of financial support - 14%
- Reconnecting with family - 11%
- Unfamiliarity with post-military programs/resources - 11%
- Finding a new identity - 9%
- Lack of family/community support - 5%

All WWII Vets Eligible for FREE Health Care & Nursing Home Services

November 10, 2023

WASHINGTON — Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that all World War II Veterans are now eligible for no-cost VA health care, medical services, and nursing home care.

All WWII Veterans who served between Dec. 7, 1941, and Dec. 31, 1946, are eligible under this expansion, regardless of their length of service or financial status. These Veterans will not have to pay copays, enrollment fees or monthly premiums.

VA is reaching out by phone and mail to encourage WWII Veterans who are not currently enrolled in VA care to apply today. Veterans who enroll may also keep their private providers, Medicare, and most other insurance to meet their health care needs.

"These members of Greatest Generation answered the call to serve when our nation — and the world — needed them most. Now, it's our job to serve them in every way that we can," said VA Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shereef Elnahal. "We are proud to provide world-class, no-cost health care to these heroes at

VA, and we encourage all of them to enroll today."

All WWII Veterans are encouraged to enroll in VA health care — the best, most-affordable health care in America for Veterans. Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are proven to have better health outcomes than non-enrolled Veterans, and VA hospitals have dramatically outperformed non-VA hospitals in overall quality ratings and patient satisfaction ratings.

Veterans who were not approved for VA health care in the past due to income limits should apply again; income levels no longer apply due to this expansion. VA cannot automatically enroll these Veterans in health care; WWII Veterans must apply for VA health care if they are not currently enrolled.

This expansion is made possible through the Joseph Maxwell Cleland and Robert Joseph Dole Memorial Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2022 (Cleland-Dole Act), signed in December 2022. To apply for VA health care, visit VA's health care enrollment website, call 1-800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411), or visit your nearest VA medical center or clinic.

Veterans Claim Service

Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Bldg.
1 Federal Drive, Room G900, Saint Paul, MN 55111
Phone: (612) 970-5669 FAX: (612)970-5404

email: vfw.vbaspl@va.gov

We'll Help with YOUR Veteran Benefits

As a Member of the VFW, you should take an Interest in the Dealings of YOUR Organization on the Post, District, Department and National levels. Attend Post, District, State Functions. Attending Your Post Meetings would be a GOOD start.

Message From Your National Council Member

By Dale Hoogeveen,
National Council Member

I attended the inaugural orientation training session for the newly elected council members of the Big 10 Conference in Kansas City in August. The training was very beneficial, and I was duly impressed by the knowledge and dedication of our employees at the National Headquarters. The following day the finance committee met to examine every line item contained in the 2023-24 budget prepared by Quartermaster General Marc Garduno. A spirited discussion ensued on numerous expense lines and at the end of the full day session, the committee reached consensus on recommending the annual budget for adoption by the National Council of Administration.

Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento expressed his support of the process, ensuring all committee members had the opportunity to voice their positions while also reiterating the need to be respectful of each comrade. This was an excellent opportunity to observe an extremely large non-profit organization in action! The full council met on Saturday with every member being given the opportunity to examine and question the budget. This meeting reinforced the need to have facts to support any changes a council member may suggest as my counterparts are diligent in their examination of the subject at hand.

The Big 10 Conference was hosted by the Department of Illinois in October and I was given the honor of nominating Dr. Jim Tuorila for election to the office of Surgeon General. Doc has served our department with distinction for many years and it will be a real pleasure to see him occupy that prestigious office.

Recognizing the time and effort our national officers and council members contribute to this wonderful organization is inspiring and humbling. As with the many previous opportunities I've been given by the comrades of the Department of Minnesota, I'm truly enjoying serving on the National Council.

As always, if you have questions, please ask!

**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
SERVICE**

YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By David Staehlin, State Membership Chairperson

Annual VFW members can easily renew their membership or upgrade to life member or Legacy Life member at www.vfw.org/renew.

VFW Life Membership benefits include:

- Avoid annual dues and renewals.
- Maintain your membership in any Post you choose, worldwide!
- Never pay an increase in dues—Guaranteed!
- Receive a 10% discount on exclusive VFW Store merchandise for the first year.

Auxiliary members can renew their membership or upgrade to life member using MALTA at malta.vfwauxiliary.org.

If you have membership questions, contact your Quartermaster or Treasurer. VFW officers and members can also contact State Membership Committee Chairman David Staehlin at 651-261-5802 or david@staehlin.us.

Better Meetings: Minutes Approval

By David Staehlin, State Parliamentarian

To speed up your meetings, our parliamentary authority, Robert's Rules of Order New Revised (12th edition), calls for a quick, streamlined approach where no motion for approval is needed.

Chair: "The Secretary (Adjutant) will read the minutes."
[Or, "The minutes have been distributed in advance."]

The Secretary reads the minutes if not distributed in advance.

Chair: "Are there any corrections to the minutes?" [Pause]

Chair: "Hearing no corrections, the minutes are approved."

The chair moves on to the next item of business.

Or, if there are corrections:

Member states a desired correction.

Chair: "If there is no objection the correction will be made."
[Pause]

Chair: "Hearing no objection,

Save the Date Veterans Day on the Hill

Wednesday, April 17, 2024
Nat'l Guard Armory,
600 Cedar St, St. Paul, MN

10:00am - Doors open
11:30am - Lunch
1:00pm - March to Rally

ALL Veterans Welcome

Watch for more information in the next issue of the Gopher Oversea'r and your VFW General Orders.

**Get Involved
Fight for Your Benefits**

the correction will be made.
Are there any other corrections to the minutes?"
[Pause]

Char: "Hearing no further corrections, the minutes are approved as corrected."

The chair moves on to the next item of business.

In the unlikely case that there is an objection to a proposed correction, members may debate the correction and adopt the correction with a majority vote.

MN VFW State Legislative Report

By Kevin L. Shepherd, State Legislative Chairperson

Hello Comrades, I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving. From a legislative view for veterans in our State I'd like to share the items that are on the Commanders Task Force's list of priorities for 2024.

There were a group of items that were to be discussed and reviewed during the Commanders Task Force meeting on 14 November.

1. We are hopeful that the legislature will continue the two year trend in to 2024 and approve a "clean" Veterans Omnibus Bill. This means that we would like to have all the Veterans topics that are brought forward to be kept separate from other bills. This keeps the bill veteran focused and doesn't muddy the water with other topics distracting from our veteran's needs.
2. We are working to make an adjustment to the property tax exclusions, we'll be approaching the legislature to change the first exclusion to veterans rated 50 to 100 percent disabled at \$200,000 off their property tax value and then provide a market value exclusion of \$400,000

for 100 percent-rated veterans. We would also like to see these values be inflation based and remove the "equal to or lesser value" language for surviving spouses.

3. There is a plan to request an alteration to MN Statute 197.63 to include County Veteran Service Officers in the list of personnel authorized to receive "vital records."
4. We are planning on asking the MN Department of Natural Resources to waive license fees for all veterans for hunting, trapping and fishing.
5. Gold Star families will garner more support this coming year as well. There will be requests to a change to MS 273.13, Subd. 34(d). It currently reads that the surviving spouse of a fallen soldier must file for property-tax exemptions and have lived in the dwelling when their service member passed away. This excludes any Minnesotans who are living elsewhere because of Active Component/Duty stationing from applying for this

property tax exemption.

6. Our Post Homes are under pressure by property taxes as well. We will once again request that our organizations, 501(c)(3)s and 19s be given the same tax treatment as our Churches and the YMCA, 501(c)(3)s.

A few more things we'd like to begin movement on are the funds collected through military and veterans license plates. Currently only the "Support our Troops" plates go into a fund managed by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA). We'd like to see the funds from the other 40 types of veterans plates flow to the MDVA. We are asking to add a few more types of plates as well – these include Jewish War Veterans, and retiree plates for all 6 branches of service.

I hope to see many of you on Wednesday, April 10th, for Veterans Day on the Hill 2024! This is when we gather together to speak with, encourage and thank our legislature for working with us to make Minnesota a more Veteran friendly place to live.

Fall Conference - September 23-25, 2022



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS - DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA



VFW MIDWINTER CONFERENCE

January 12-14, 2024

Marriott NW, 7025 Northland Dr. N, Brooklyn Park, MN

FRIDAY, January 12, 2024

6:30 - 10:30am	Breakfast at Boundary Waters Cafe	
8:30 - 9:30am	Pre-Con Meeting	Arbor Lakes
10:00 - 11:00am	VFW Internal Affairs Committee	Lake Michigan
NOON - 4:00pm	Registration and Banquet Tickets	Northland Foyer
1:00 - 2:00pm	VFW Finance Committee	Lake Michigan
2:00 - 5:00pm	VFW Claims Open Office Hours	Arbor Lakes
2:00 - 3:00pm	VFW Charitable Association	Lake Huron
2:30 - 3:30pm	Auxiliary Hospital Reps & Deps Meeting (Invitation Only)	Lake Michigan
3:00 - 4:30pm	Gambling Seminar	Elm Creek
3:00 - 6:00pm	Displays and Vendors	Hallway in front of MN Ballroom Lobby
6:00 - 8:00pm	VFW Council of Administration	Minnesota Ballroom
6:00 - 9:00pm	Auxiliary Council of Administration	Northland Ballroom

SATURDAY, January 13, 2024

7:00 - 11:00am	Breakfast at Boundary Waters Cafe	
7:00 - 9:00am	Register Poppy Displays	Hallway from Hotel Lobby to Northland Foyer
8:00 - 10:00am	VFW Committee Meetings	
	VFW Bylaws Committee	Lake Michigan
	Legislative Committee	Lake Huron
	VFW Riders	Lake Erie
8:00 - 1:00pm	Registration and Banquet Tickets	Northland Foyer
8:00 - 3:00pm	Displays and Vendors	Hallway in front of MN Ballroom Lobby
9:30 - 2:30pm	Auxiliary Meeting	Northland Ballroom
10:15 - 11:15am	Nonprofit Workshop for Cmdrs/QMs Marc Garduno, Nat'l Qtrm. General	Hennepin Salon 3
10:15 - 11:15am	Mental Health focusing on SAD and Suicide Prevention. Krysta Stanenas & Kristi Stites, MN Dept. of Veterans Affairs (JOINT SESSION)	Hennepin Salon 3
11:30 - 1:00pm	Lunch Break	
1:00 - 2:00pm	Cyber Safety and Computer Basics Jarrod McReynolds, Dept. PAO (JOINT SESSION)	Northland Ballroom
1:00 - 2:00pm	VFW Adj/QM Open Office Hours Barry Henriksen, Dept. Adj/QM	Hennepin Salon 3
2:00 - 3:00pm	District VOD Winners Party	Hennepin Salon 1
2:30 - 4:00pm	Buddy Poppy Chairmen Meeting	Minnesota Ballroom
4:00 - 5:00pm	Catholic Mass	Lake Michigan
4:00 - 5:00pm	Non-Denominational Church Service Pastor Robert Smith, Hope Community Church	Lake Huron
5:30 - 6:30pm	District VOD Winners Reception	Arbor Lakes
5:30 - 6:45pm	Banquet Reception (Cash Bar)	Atrium
6:30pm	Line up for the Procession	
6:45pm	Banquet Doors Open	
7:00 - 9:30pm	Grand Banquet Procession begins	Grand Ballroom

SUNDAY, January 14, 2024

7:00 - 11:00am	Breakfast at Boundary Waters Cafe	
9:00 - 11:00am	VFW Council of Administration	Minnesota Ballroom

HOUSING RESERVATIONS

VFW Midwinter Conference 2024
Friday, Jan. 12 -- Sunday, Jan. 14
Marriott NW
7025 Northland Dr. N., Brooklyn Park, MN
For Reservations call 1-877-303-1681

Room Block: **2024 Annual Midwinter Conference**
You MUST say "2024 Annual Midwinter Conference" or you will be told that there are no rooms
Room Rate: \$125/night + tax
(Standard King OR Two Double Beds)
Check in: 4pm Check out: 11am

DEADLINE -- December 21, 2023

Reserve online at vfwmn.org/news/midwinterconference

MIDWINTER - Cont. from Page 1

The last new seminar for the day is "Cyber Safety and Computer Basics?" with the Department Public Affairs Officer, Jarrod McReynolds. His class will be held in the Northland Ballroom after lunch, and this is a JOINT session.

While we have many special things going on at the Midwinter Conference, we still need to be diligent in conducting the business of our organization. Throughout the weekend we will hold various committee and program meetings.

Friday will bring the MN VFW Charitable Association meeting, Gambling Seminar, Auxiliary meeting and more. The day will end with both VFW and Auxiliary Council Meetings. During the meetings the Councils will conduct program, financial and other official business. Attendees will get a good feel for what takes place in overseeing the Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary. The VFW Council of Administration will reconvene Sunday morning at 9:00 am to conclude their official business at the Midwinter Conference.

On Saturday morning there are three VFW Committee meetings that any member is welcome to attend. You can choose from the By-Laws, Legislative, and the VFW Riders.

The Marriott has a wonderful space that allows us to spread out and expand our activities. During Midwinter, we strive to provide various displays and vendors that will be of interest to everyone in attendance. Everything from Vets Homes to community Services.

Midwinter brings the opportunity to use the Buddy Poppies leftovers

for the contest. Posts and Auxiliaries create displays that fall into one of three different categories: Memorial, Promotional and Decorative. The first and second place winners in the three main categories are eligible to compete at the VFW National Convention in July.

The highlight of the Midwinter Conference is always Saturday's Grand Banquet. During the Banquet we will receive greetings from the VFW and Auxiliary National Representatives Marc Garduno and Donna Mills. Thank you to every 2024 Award Sponsor in donating towards this event.

The awards are the favorite part of the evening. We honor our three State Teacher of the Year winners, categories K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grades. We continue the evening by listening to the Patriot's Pen (6-8 grade) winner's speech "How are you inspired by America". The winner will compete at the National level competition for a \$5,000 top award.

Lastly, the announcement of the nine District Voice of Democracy winners. The First-place winner will give their speech on this year's essay theme "What are the greatest attributes of our Democracy"? The State Voice of Democracy winner will be presented with a lovely trophy and a check for \$2,000. They earned a free trip to Washington D.C. competing for a \$35,000 scholarship.

If you attended in the past, then you know all the information, activities and social opportunities that await you. So, invite fellow members and plan to attend the Department of Minnesota's Annual Midwinter Conference.

2024 Annual Midwinter Conference

Saturday, January 13th, 2024

Tickets \$40/person (No Refunds)

Reception 5:30pm Dinner 6:45pm

Deadline: Wednesday December 27, 2023

Menu: Mixed green with shaved carrots, beets and watermelon radish drizzled with a citrus vinaigrette.

The entree is a thick, succulent, braised short rib with mushroom jus and golden Yukon mash, roasted carrots and green beans, and fresh baked rolls.

For dessert, a rich and creamy New York style cheesecake.

Bon Appetite!!

Assigned seating and tickets will be available at the Registration Desk

Mail and Make Checks Payable to: **Dept. of MN - VFW**
Rice Street Station
PO Box 17146
St. Paul, MN 55117

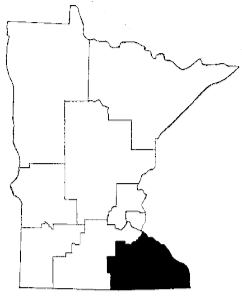
Please Reserve _____ Tickets at \$40/person Midwinter Conference Banquet Dinner.

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Post/Auxiliary # _____ District # _____

Email: _____

News from YOUR District Commanders and Presidents!



**Colin Atkinson, Commander
First District**

Greetings from First District!
We are right in the heart of fall and moving towards winter. Only time will tell if nature decides to create a true cold and snowy presence this year. Fall seems to be one of the busiest seasons for Minnesotans. Some of us are winterizing vehicles, recreational toys, boats, motorcycles, and even raking our lawns. Some of us are deer hunting, getting ready for Thanksgiving and possibly even hanging Christmas lights.

Along with these things, there are many important things we shouldn't forget to be deeply committed to. We are into the heart of the year for VFW programs. VOD and Patriots Pen entrants should be sent to your District for judging. I hope that 1st District is as successful with these programs as it's been in the past. Let's also not forget about the VFW Teacher of the year entries. There are many great teacher candidates for this program who have never been asked to participate.

First District officers have been diligently out working on post inspections. In my calculations, we are hoping to be done by December 31st. I personally enjoy going to different posts to do inspections and visit towns I haven't visited in a long time. I must commend all the posts I've inspected so far. I'm especially proud of First District posts when I walk into an inspection and/or stay for a meeting and see most of the members wearing their VFW cover. I'm also impressed at the great participation these posts have at their meetings. Keep up the good work First District!

I would personally like to

DISTRICT 1 - Cont. on Page 12

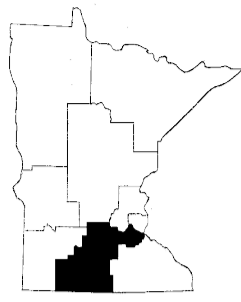


**Tammy Shell, Auxiliary
President First District**

Greetings from the First District Auxiliary.

Things have certainly been busy here in the 1st District. We made it through the first meeting without melting although it was close. The A/C quit working in our meeting room. Even though it was hot, we completed our work a bit quicker than usual.

During my visits to auxiliaries, I have been reinvigorated in our cause to serve our veterans and their families. It is so amazing to see all the different ways each of them reaches out and lends a hand. In



**Len Gudmunson, Commander
Second District**

I can't believe that the year is almost half done. Being fairly new to the District, I am trying to visit every post. I believe that I am about a third of the way through. The new friendships that I am making will be ones that last.

We are halfway done with our inspections and plan to have them done by Midwinter Conference. We cover a lot of ground just like the other districts it is a challenge but some how they all get done.

I'm sorry that this article is so short. I have to thank the VFW membership for their support through this time in my life. God bless all of my brothers and sisters and please stay safe.

Before I forget, I wish each and every one of you a blessed Thanksgiving and a glorious Christmas.



**Dawn Kaping, Auxiliary
President Second District**

Greetings all!

I hope everyone had a memorable and enjoyable Thanksgiving. I am thankful for my VFW and VFW Auxiliary family.

We had our planning meeting in August to discuss our upcoming year. Our committees met on the standing rules and spending plan and we made plans to visit all the auxiliaries for their official visits.

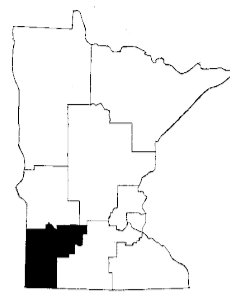
In September, we had our first District meeting of the new year. Thank you Jordan VFW and Auxiliary for hosting our meeting and doing such a great job! We had a great turnout, including some new faces. We approved the changes to our standing rules and the spending plan. There were some discussions on some fun activities for Hastings Veterans Home.

Our next meeting will be in Mankato on January 6th. I look forward to seeing more new faces and greeting friends.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas, a joyous Holiday Season and all the best as we move closer to the New Year!

their communities they are painting historical buildings, assist with blood bank donations, cleaning up waterways.

The youth in our communities are benefiting not only by our National Programs with the chairman going out and promoting coloring, singing and essay contest but by hosting



**Matthew Martin, Commander
Third District**

Greetings comrades and happy Fall from 3rd District. Everything is rolling along in the 3rd District. The Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen submissions have been turned in. Inspections are coming along and should be completed before Midwinter Conference. I would like to say Happy Veteran's Day and I hope that the many programs went well for all Districts and hope everyone had a good Veteran's Day. Not much is happening besides the normal fall events, such as, the hunting season, fall clean-up, school concerts, Veteran's Day, etc.

Wishing everyone Happy Holidays as the year comes to a close.



**Carolyn Penning, Auxiliary
President Third District**

Life can hand you a lot all at once as we all know.

We had a very well attended District 3 meeting in October. Commander Matt Martin presented District 3 Auxiliary President Carolyn Penning with a beautiful plaque in memory of her husband who pass away September 18, 2023. John was a life member of VFW Post 2603. Thank You all.

We have been trying to get our inspections done and all auxiliaries are doing well. The Worthington VFW Post 2603 and American Legion were asked to be part of the Veterans Day Program at St. Mary's School. We presented the "13 Folds of the American Flag". The kids felt it was very informative. We provided the school with a new flag to replace the tattered one they raise and lower every day. It was a great program.

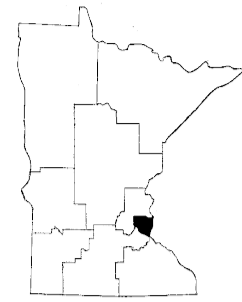
Our Auxiliaries and Posts sent in their winners for VOD and PP. They are excited hear how they did on the District and State Level. The district auxiliaries all have wonderful plans to honor the area veterans.

The Veterans Home in Luverne was closed for a few weeks due to Covid. Now, we are able to go play bingo with them and plan Christmas for them.

Merry Christmas to all.

Halloween parties and "Shop with Santa" and other Christmas Programs.

Our Preston Veterans Home is nearing completion. The hope is that it will be open by December. They will have many needs after the residents have arrived. It has been suggested that art and creative kits



**Michael Lindvall, Commander
Fourth District**

Last year the Department reached 100% through a lot of hard work from the posts. It's never too early to have membership drives and think about getting your Post Commander a white hat and being named to the All-State Team. From there being named an All-American post is not that much more work. The bottom line is membership. Make your post a place that is vibrant and does relevant things. Then membership will follow.

I would like to thank Post 1782, White Bear Lake, and Post 7555, Roseville, for having two outstanding events on Veterans Day. These occasions are great examples of bringing veterans, families, and friends together to spend time and reminisce. I encourage other posts to host events that bring their members and the public together.



**Carol Kratz, Auxiliary
President Fourth District**

I want to thank our VFW and Auxiliary veterans who have served our country and continue to carry on the challenge to assist veterans and their families.

Hats off to our Past 4th District Presidents, who attend everything, remain as district officers and/or are part of our programs and communicate almost weekly. Without your dedication who knows where we would be.

At our August meeting, we held two schools of instruction. All chairmen discussed both the national and department bulletins.

In the 4th District each of our auxiliaries has a folder in which we place program information, contest deadlines and event flyers.

We have a small sewing committee to take care of the needs of our VA patients and veterans home residents. Our fundraiser committee is working on a special event, TBD.

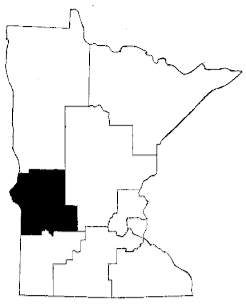
The next District 4 meeting will be January 20, 2024 at 9am at the N. St. Paul post

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.

will be needed.

Our Membership Chair Faye Brown has been busy talking to our auxiliaries. Six auxiliaries are at 100%. We are pushing for 13 of them to be at 100% by December 1st. Get your dues paid.

I look forward to connecting with everyone at Midwinter.



Lee Christopherson, Commander
Fifth District

Greetings from the 5th!

District community activities are going strong with some of the posts putting on membership, picnic and salad luncheons during the summer, also honoring our veterans with great Veterans Day Programs and not to mention of all the activities at the Posts.

All the posts in the district are doing their best to sign up new members by conducting membership drives to make and exceed our goal of 102%.

The Summer has come and gone. Now it time to gather with friends and family for the holiday season. I hope that everyone had a Happy Thanksgiving.

Our next District meeting is scheduled for Willmar VFW Post 1639 on January 7th at 2pm and then rounding off our year at Osakis VFW Post 7902 on April 14th at 10am. I encourage the members of the 5th be at the meetings in person but I will try to make Zoom accessible. There are no guarantees.

I look forward to seeing you all in the future at Midwinter Conference in the city of Brooklyn Park.

Let us have a great New year. I hope everyone has a Very Merry Christmas, and a Joyous New Year.



Deb Wieshalla, Auxiliary
President Sixth District

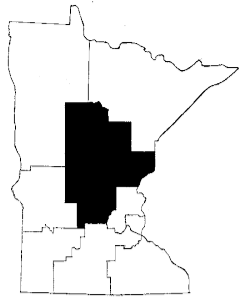
District 6 has been very busy.

Along with my trusty helpers, Joyce, Sue, and Rita most of the official visits have been completed. I am happy to say most auxiliaries are in good working order. I have enjoyed traveling to visit with members and sharing ideas with them.

We were honored to host National President Carla Martinez when she visited Minnesota. A huge shout out to Monticello Post and Auxiliary 8731 for hosting the reception and dinner, and to the VFW Riders for the escort. A great number of members turned out to honor and welcome her. One of the highlights to this visit was touring the Military Museum at Camp Ripley, and going to the Minnesota Veterans Cemetery to view the series of paintings that make up the Veterans Art Monument in the Committal Hall. The artist, Charles Kapsner was on hand to share insight and information about these paintings.

In October we held our annual District Auction prior to the meeting in McGregor. Many wonderful items were donated and bought to raise funds for the District Auxiliary.

We will be holding our annual Cookie Walk, December 2 at Post



Ryan Johnson, Commander
Sixth District

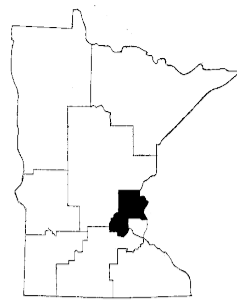
Comrades,

The sixth district has been busy in the last couple of months. We just completed our second Veteran VFW dart tournament held at the Monticello Post 8731. There was a good turn out, and we were able to sign up one new member from the tournament. We also received over a thousand dollars in donations for a lifetime member of our Long Prairie Post that unfortunately lost his house in a house fire.

We are also working diligently on our post inspections. I am happy to say that we are over 50% complete at this point. We are also looking forward to presenting the District award for Teacher of the Year, Patriot's Pen, and Voice of Democracy at our upcoming District meeting.

As we continue to go forward, I just ask that we as a VFW keep striving for success when it comes to our recruiting and retention programs. I thank everyone for their hardworking and dedication.

I look forward to seeing my fellow comrades at the Midwinter Conference.



Kenneth Schroeffer, Commander
Seventh District

Greetings from the Mighty 7th.

The past couple of months have flown by. We have been working hard on post inspections. There are only a few left and they will be completed by the end of this year.

What a fantastic Veterans Day. Thank you to Isanti Post 2735 and Cmdr. Tim Kent for the invitation to their Veterans Day celebration. Unfortunately, the celebration scheduled for the Minneapolis Veterans Home had to be cancelled. COVID strikes again.

Our next District meeting will be on December 9, 10am at the Bloomington Post 1296. I can't wait for the announcement of the District VOD, Patriot's Pen and Teacher of the Year announcements. It's such a well kept secret, I don't even know the winners.

The Midwinter Conference is over a month away. Get your rooms reserved and your banquet tickets ordered. This will be a great event.

Lastly, the Holiday Season is but weeks away. I would like to wish a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all of you and your families.



MN VFW Charitable Association

By Ken Schroeffer, Association President

We are fast approaching the end of 2023. I want to reminder each post to turn in your unsold calendars, stubs from sold calendars and a check to cover the cost of each sold calendar by December 15.

Take advantage of these last few weeks to sell as many more calendars as possible. Remember, these calendars make great holiday gifts. After all, everyone needs a calendar!

If you have sold all of your calendars, please **DO NOT** send them through the mail in a first class white envelope. All first class mail

428, St. Cloud. Come ready to buy some delicious treats and get a head start on your Holiday baking!

Midwinter Conference is fast approaching, and I am looking forward to seeing many old friends and making new ones while in attendance.

I wish each of you and your families and loved ones a Very Happy Holiday Season, and A Bright New Year!!!

is sorted by mailing machines and tend to get torn. If mailed, they must be returned in either a brown 5"x7" envelope, a padded mailing envelope or in-person to the MN VFW Office.

Don't forget to return any unsold calendars as well.

Checks for the calendars you sold will be sent out in a matter of weeks after receipt of unsold calendars, stubs and checks.

Thank you for all that you do for our veterans.

Save the Date Veterans Day on the Hill

Wednesday, April 17, 2024
Nat'l Guard Armory,
600 Cedar St, St. Paul, MN

ALL Veterans Welcome
More info in next issue of Oversea'r

DISTRICT MEETINGS

- First District**
Feb. 3 Rochester #1216 @ 9:00 AM
- Second District**
Jan. 6 Mankato #950 @ 1 PM
- Third District**
Jan. 6 Granite Falls #3871 @ 10 AM
- Fourth District**
Jan. 20 N. St. Paul #1350 @ 9 AM
- Fifth District**
Jan. 7 Willmar #1639 @ 2 PM
- Sixth District**
Feb. 3 Sauk Rapids #6992 @ 1 PM
- Seventh District**
Feb. 3 Hopkins #425 @ 10 AM
- Eighth District**
Feb. 3 Gilbert #4456 @ 9 AM
- Ninth District**
Mar. 9 E. Grand Forks #3817 @ 1 PM
-
- MOC**
Feb. 24 Chaska #1791 @ 10 AM



Doris Anderson, Auxiliary
President Seventh District

Hello Sisters, Brothers, and Comrades,

Greetings from the 7th. Since Fall Conference, we have been busy with inspections, membership dinners and drives, craft and bake sales, activities with our veterans in our VA homes and nursing home facilities, and VOD/Patriot's Pen Scholarships.

At our District meeting in September we had a School of Instruction for the Treasurers and Secretaries. Twelve out of thirteen auxiliaries were present.

At our December 9th District meeting we presented the District Patriots Pen and VOD winners as well as the Teacher of the Year.

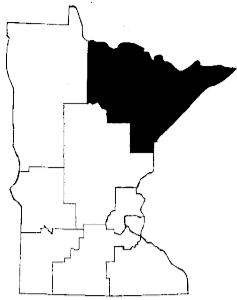
SEASONS GREETINGS TO ALL
SEE YOU AT MIDWINTER

COMMANDER - Cont. from Page 1

handout. Gather at your posts, travel together to the Capital in St. Paul and wear your VFW hats. The more hats that we have there the better.

I have had several opportunities this year to visit different posts and meet with the members of this great organization, I like getting out with the members of this organization because in my eyes we are all brothers and sisters in arms. We all served this country. It may have been in different times and in different places, but we all have a common experience, we served in combat.

With that, I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving no matter where you spent it. I wish each of you a safe holiday season and that you have a great new year.



Mary Thompson, Commander Eighth District

Comrades,
The 8th District has only 3 Post Inspections out of 19 left to complete as of this print. Two of the three are already scheduled and will be completed in the next couple of weeks. Job well done to our Chief Inspector Len Groom, and Deputy Inspectors Gretchen Larsen, Joy Ausman, Ozzie, and myself for hitting the ground running on this right after Fall Conference. Thank you also to the posts in the 8th District for your compliance and readiness in expediting these inspections.

VOD and PP essays are wrapped up at the posts and the District. The participation in the programs was a bit underwhelming, but we appreciate those who have taken the time to participate in recognizing our youth in the community.

Veteran's Day across the 8th District found many communities and schools hosting programs to recognize our veterans. It is always amazing to see the veterans come together and take pride in their service and want to share that journey with their friends and families. Everyday should be Veteran's Day!! It is also awesome to watch the profile pictures on Facebook all change for the day to pictures of when we served in the uniform and our youth reminisced.

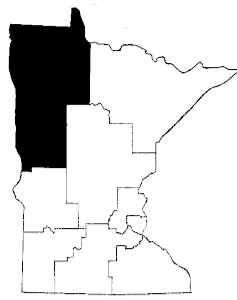
The Holiday Season is fast approaching with Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year coming at us. We need to remain vigilant in checking in on our comrades! If you are one of the lucky ones who are fulfilled with family, friends, and joy through the season, spread some of that around. Call your comrades and check on them. Sometimes even veterans who have friends and family around them still yearn for the comradery of our organization. Let's keep it checking through the holiday season. We should never take a vacation from our mission.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Midwinter Conference in Brooklyn Park in January. Our next District 8 meeting will be at Post 4456 in Gilbert, MN on February 3rd, 2024!



Marlaina Hart, Auxiliary President Eighth District

The District 8 Auxiliaries have been busy serving our veterans area wide, in Silver Bay and local assisted living facilities and nursing homes. They have given out Halloween cards and gift bags, Veterans Day



Richard Gabe, Commander Ninth District

Hello again from the 9th District often called the Northwest Territory. All is good up here. The crops are in and everyone is preparing to settle for a long winters night.

Our last meeting was 16 September in Thief River Falls. They always step up to be gracious hosts. Thanks again to Gary Klemetson and Post 2793 for a great job hosting. There was a strong turn out with the demise of COVID. We welcomed Department Jr. Vice Commander Ed Keogh who seems to know how to get up here. He is always welcome. At times the district meeting got a little heated, but all opinions were duly noted without rancor.

The district offers their condolences to the brothers and sisters of Kennedy Post 3828 on the sudden passing of Neil Johnson, Post Commander. He will be missed. On a personal note Pelican Rapids Post 5252 lost two of the greatest generation. My mother-in-law Marcy Korda, WWII Army nurse and Budd Andrews a WWII bomber crew member passed away. They were both 102 and a half years old and ran out of steam. I like to say that a hand reached out and said to them come home your watch is over. They were the last of our WWII veterans and will be deeply missed in the community and Post.

Up here we are excitedly waiting for the opening of the Veterans home in Bemidji. That will take some pressure off of the Fergus Falls home and will be closer to friends and relatives in the Northwest. Like the Fergus Falls home we will actively support the Bemidji home.

Other than that, all is quiet up here. Our next meeting is 9 December at Fergus Falls Post 612. During the meeting we will finalize the district by-laws and standing orders, which will be voted on in March.

Until I see everyone at the Midwinter Conference, I wish all a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and a Happy New Year.

Cards have been made and sent and Veteran's Day events and lunches were held all over our District. Local schools have colored pictures for the veterans and were used as placemats at the lunches. One auxiliary held a Quilts of Valor Presentation on Veteran's Day for four deserving veterans of the post. Another auxiliary held a dedication of an old bus depot door in remembrance of the veteran's that went through that door on their way to the military or coming home. The door is displayed at the local VFW behind the POW/MIA Table, and in honor of eight

Post 3839 Donates Funds

Jenkins VFW Post 3839 has been collecting donations since July 14 for the injured and fallen officers from Fargo, ND. Patrons have generously donated \$1,186 which was matched by the post. On September 28, these checks will be passed on to the Leadership Care Fund in Fargo, ND.



Jenkins Post 3839 Commander Dan Erickson and Bar Manager Ayden Hood present checks to Pequot Lakes Police Department

Convention Committee

By Scott Bill, Director Convention Committee

Good day comrades and auxiliary members. The committee has been busy with reviewing past surveys and trying to lock down contracts that our members can afford. We have the fun Midwinter Conference right on our doorstep. Looking forward to filling the rooms for what we hope will be a fun VOD/Patriot's Pens banquet.

As many of you know, we are trying our best to keep the locations and cost in line with what you all want while balancing what locations are willing to work with our organization. If you live in an area that can manage our volume and you have a post/auxiliary that would be willing to support a conference/convention, please reach out to VFW HQ. The locations need to have enough hotel space, meeting spaces and reasonable prices for our gatherings which is where this team

is currently challenged.

2024 Department Convention in Rochester- we have one more signed contact with Rochester and then the committee will review again. I know there are some that feel it is too far to drive. I can understand that thought process but once again, we currently only have so many locations we can use. Rochester offers many fun restaurants and activities especially in the summer when you are not in classes. Additionally, VFW Post 1215 which did a wonderful job during Fall Conference is having conversations regarding support for our summer convention, more to come in our next communication.

On behalf of the entire Convention Committee, we appreciate your attendance at these gatherings.

local boys that didn't make it home from Vietnam.

All auxiliaries are in the process of judging their Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy entries to be sent to the District Scholarship Chair for judging at the district level.

We are all driving hard to get new members to join the auxiliary because there is "power" in numbers. Besides, we want to win the department contest between the post and the auxiliary.

We had a "Take a Vet Shopping" event. A van came down from the Silver Bay Veterans Home to the Range and we helped them shop. After shopping they went to a local VFW post for a rigatoni lunch, cooked and served by the auxiliary.

District 8 also sponsored the Halloween Party at the Silver Bay Veterans Home. Volunteers went along to help with bingo and other festivities. The roads were that day. They prevented a lot of people from going.

With Christmas and New Years coming up, plans are in the works for some special events. Cards are a big hit and many are being made and sent for these two days. That's what is going on in District 8 in a nutshell. Thank you



Jamie Cassavant, Auxiliary President Ninth District

Hello everyone.

The Holiday Season is upon us. Be sure to take time for family and friends. This year I have been so lucky to have all of you in my life. Without your friendship and support, it just would not have been the same.

The 9th District is doing very well and that is solely because of your dedication to our organization. Granted we have ups and downs but we do it together. The hand of fellowship has been extended throughout our auxiliaries and all I can say is: THANK YOU.

Our Winter District 9 Auxiliary Meeting will be in Fergus Falls on December 9 and we are looking forward to a great day and great attendance. Looking forward to our "Meet and Greet", our sharing of ideas, our auxiliary project highlights and having some fun as we share and take care of business.

Hope your Holiday Season is filled with family, friends and taking care of our veterans and their families in a special way.

VFW Ramps up Efforts to Combat Claim Sharks

By Jon Gohn, Claims Director

Predatory Claim Shark companies are engaging in illegal activities and there is no gray area here, no matter how much money they want to throw at it

November 08, 2023

VFW National Commander
Duane Sarmiento:

For more than a century, your VFW has been on the forefront of advocating for veterans and their earned benefits. In the last year alone, more than 550,000 veterans received more than \$13 billion in benefits from VA through the diligence and professionalism of the VFW's global network of VA-accredited service officers. Not a penny of this \$13 billion went to line the pockets of the VFW. It all went to the veterans, as the law requires.

The VFW has been a vocal opponent of predatory "Claim Sharks" – companies who charge veterans illegal fees for sub-par VA benefit claims assistance. Make no mistake, the proliferation of these illicit organizations is a threat, not only to the VFW's cornerstone National Veterans Service (NVS) program, but an even greater threat to the VA benefits system as we know it.

Since their emergence, the VFW has ratcheted up the pressure on these companies by passing legislation to crack down on their practices at the state level and are working to help veterans bring litigation against them. We have trained our more than 2,300 VFW Accredited Service Officers on how to handle Claim Sharks, and we continue to seek out veterans who need help getting out of

these predatory contracts.

Now these Claim Sharks are trying to normalize and legitimize their financial exploitation of our nation's disabled veterans – they even named VSOs like the VFW as their "threats." While we should be flattered that they recognize the threat we pose, now is the time to decisively defeat this scourge.

The Bottom line is: Predatory Claim Shark companies are engaging in illegal activities. There is no gray area here, no matter how much money they want to throw at it. Their latest collusion is a desperate attempt to avoid accountability.

Your VFW has aggressively pursued this issue in all corners of government, solidifying the veteran community's stance on this issue. You will see more from the VFW in the coming weeks, asking you to take action with your Congressional representatives, your state legislatures and your communities. We encourage you to read up on the facts and familiarize yourself with this issue, and to help we have produced a VFW Claim Shark Fact Sheet for you to use and distribute widely to veterans. (Download a printer-friendly version here.)

Like the VFW said last year before Congress, "Any group that fails to adhere to VA's well-established standards of accreditation and fee arrangements should be greeted at the door by Capitol Police, not offered a seat at the same table as VA-accredited representatives who are held to certain professional and ethical standards."



DON'T FEED THE SHARKS



DontFeedTheSharks.org

What is a "Claim Shark"?

- A Claim Shark is an individual or company that charges hefty fees to "assist" or "consult" veterans with filing their VA benefit claims – this practice is illegal!
- Claim Sharks are not VA accredited, meaning they aren't required to adhere to the well-established professional and ethical standards of VA accreditation, so their advice can often be misleading or even fraudulent.
- Like a "Loan Shark," once you're in, you can't get out, and may be subject to new and hidden fees whenever you get a new rating, no matter who does the work.

Some of their predatory practices are:

- Promising or guaranteeing an increased disability rating or percentage increase.
- Advertising expedited VA claims decisions.
- Requesting login credentials to access a veteran's personal information through secure VA websites like eBenefits or VA.gov.
- Using confusing tactics or ambiguous language to mislead claimants or coerce them into signing a contract.
- Telling veterans to forego VA exams and offering health consultations within their own network of doctors.

Who are the Claim Sharks?

- Trajector Medical
- Vet Benefits Guide
- Veterans Guardian
- VA Claims Insider
- Telemedica
- Patriot Angels
- Veteran Care Services
- VetComm
- VA Claims Academy
- Vet Assist

Veterans can protect themselves by:

- Always working with VA accredited representatives.
- Attending all exams ordered by VA.
- Not signing contracts.
- Not agreeing to fees or payments from future benefits.
- Not agreeing to pay for medical consultations or opinions.
- Not providing access to Protected Health Information or Personal Identifiable Information.

Who is NOT a Claim Shark?

- VA accredited veterans service organization representatives, like the VFW
- VA accredited claims agents
- VA accredited attorneys
- Attorneys assisting with Camp LeJeune lawsuits who do not charge excessive fees



This fight may get a little messy in the coming weeks, but the VFW is determined to stop predatory Claim

Sharks and we are eager to serve alongside you in this fight.

Frank Wilkins Still Going Strong at 99

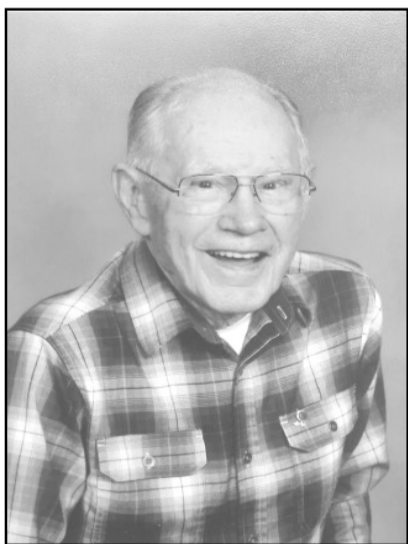
WWII veteran Frank Wilkins, born July 5, 1924 has lived on his own ever since the passing of his wife in 2010.

Born in Minneapolis but raised in Mankato, he enlisted in the US Army February 16, 1943. After the standard basic training, the Army knew what was best for Frank and where he was needed the most. He became a combat rifleman.

Then Frank was off to see the world as part of the 45th Infantry (Thunderbird) Division.

Frank and the 45th were deployed in late June, 1943 to North Africa for additional training. One month later, they all landed in Sicily by way of an amphibious assault. There they met some stiff resistance. September 10 it was off to Salerno, Italy. They fought their way to just north of Cassino before being pulled out to prepare for a beach assault at Anzio, Italy on January 22, 1944.

There, Frank recalled hearing the incoming shells from German railroad guns ("Anzio Annie" and "Anzio Express"). The big guns were targeting supply dumps and hospitals on the beach and supply ships in



the harbor. He remembered a B-25 bomber flying 25 feet off the deck right over the them to drop bombs on the advancing Germans.

While at Anzio, Frank along with others was hit by a stray shell. He walked to the hospital to get patched up and was sent on to Naples to recover. Later, he rejoined the 45th as they fought their way thru Italy before being withdrawn for yet another assault landing in southern France, August, 1944. Then up through western France to the

German border by the end of the year. In March 1945, the 45th crossed the Rhine River and headed southward towards Homburg, Nuremberg and Munich before stopping near Dachau when the war ended.

Frank was discharged December 4, 1945. He enrolled in Mankato State under the GI Bill. It was there that he met his sweetheart Phyllis. A year after they both graduated, they got engaged and were married in Worthington June 17, 1950. They moved to Mankato and finally settled in Willmar. They had four lovely children.

Frank had a successful career in banking and retired at age 65. He has stayed busy with building model railroads, ship models, wood carving and shop projects made of wood for gifts to his children and friends. He still lives independently at home in Willmar.

He has remained an active member of VFW Post 1639, Masons, and the American Legion.

Every Saturday after church, he drives his car to Willmar VFW Post 1639 to visit friends and pickup chicken wings for supper.

TOMB TREK - Cont. from Page 1

Supreme (National) Color Guard team. Therefore, we make the trip to Washington, DC to have the HONOR of receiving the wreaths from the Military Order of the Cootie (MOC) and Military Order of the Cootie Auxiliary (MOCA) members to be placed at the Argonne Cross.

As a member of this Color Guard, I have been able to participate in this wonderful event. It has also been a great honor to serve with some amazing people on this team. Unfortunately, not all members of the Color Guard are able to go every year to participate in this great honor.

During our recent visit to Washington, DC, we attended the Supreme C of A and training provided by our Supreme officers. We did have time to visit some very memorable sites. Typically, we break into small groups. We make sure that members get to see what is on their list such as the Monuments in the Mall, Smithsonian Museums, as well as other local sites. Our entire Color Guard team has at least one gathering for a meal somewhere in the area because we are a very close group.



By Jeff Kronback, Project Coordinator



In helping with the Commander's and President's Project so far this year, we've been spreading the word by being in parades, at veterans resource events, farm fest, MN State Fair, hosting brat stands, hosted a golf tournament at Mayflower Golf Club in Fairfax, MN, hosted a corn hole tournament and ax throwing at the Willmar VFW Post 1639, visiting posts and more helping to spread the word about raising funds for Veterans on the Water from Arlington MN, and Warriors And Walleyes

Outdoors from Wood Lake, MN.

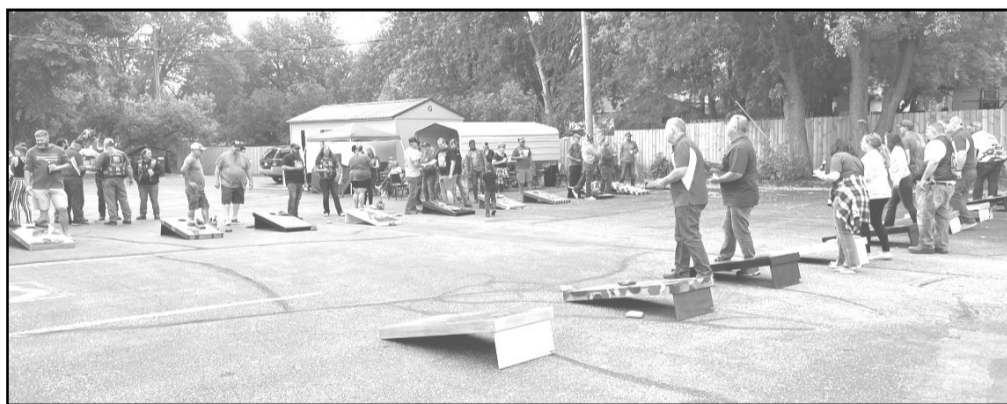
It's been a fun journey so far with Twyla Scofield (President's Project Chair) and all of the others who have helped and been a part of these events to raise money.

The next event is a dart tournament at Monticello VFW Post 8731 on January 27, 2024. Please sign up, and come out to help a great cause.

A flyer and sign up sheet was included in the December Department General Orders.



Pictured above at the Fall Conference, L to R: Dan Meyer (VFW State Cmdr.), Twyla Scofield (Chair President's Project, Lance Peterson (CEO of Warriors and Walleyes Outdoors), Tammy Peterson (Treasurer of Warriors and Walleyes Outdoors), Phil Klink (President of Veterans on the Water) and Jeff Kronback (Chair, Commander's Project)



Pictured above: Serious competition at the VFW State Corn Hole Tournament held at Willmar Post 1639.

DISTRICT 1 - Cont. from Page 8

thank the Eugene H. Truax Post in Northfield for inviting me to their membership supper. Not only was the food good, but they also had a secret presentation where they hosted a VFW comrade from North Carolina to fly up and stay in town. At the supper they presented this comrade with a service dog. He didn't realize that he would get to meet the dog that night. When the service dog saw him and he saw it, both took to each other like they were old friends. Both he and his service dog had to stay for 6 weeks in Northfield to acclimate with the training, and for him to work with his new service dog.

This year's Fall Conference was very convenient for the members in First District. I personally enjoyed seeing familiar faces and meeting

new comrades. The breakout sessions were professional, educational and timely. I'm looking forward to the Midwinter Conference in Brooklyn Park not just because it's a great place to hold a conference, but because it's time for our programs to take center stage.

As far as programs go, we are working hard on our membership goals. Currently we are in 2nd place with 90.46% in the Department of Minnesota VFW calculations. I, for one was shocked when I saw the number of continual members that we have in First District. I have been working hard to remind posts to try different ways to get these members turned into Life Members of the VFW. We have a long way to go to reach the 102% membership goal as we get the annual members all paid. Many posts are out there knocking

Bus Depot Door Lives On

An important part of downtown Grand Rapids was the Redding Bus Depot. Built February, 1941, the original building housed Redding's Cafe and the Bus Depot with the Miller Bowling Center in the basement.

The Bus Depot was the transportation hub of the community as Greyhound buses carried residents to locations throughout Minnesota. It finally closed its doors in 2021 when several buildings were removed to make way for the expansion of the Itasca County Justice Center.

It was during the Vietnam days in the 60's and 70's that many young men and women walked through the Bus Depot door as they were drafted or volunteered to serve their country. Residents and military personnel continued to use this door as recently as the mid-90's.

When it came time for the building to be torn down, Vietnam veteran Kenny Clifton sprang into action with the idea of saving and preserving the very door that so many of his fellow veterans walked through. With the help of the County Veteran Service Officer, the Itasca County Commissioners approved donating the door to the Itasca

County Historical Society. The next issue was to find a "home" for the door.

It was agreed that best place to display the door would be at VFW Post 1720 in Grand Rapids.

The old Bus Depot Door had found a "home" at last.



Pictured above: Old Bus Depot Door with brass plaques honoring eight local men who lost their lives in Vietnam.

VA Helps Native American Veterans get Homes

November 28, 2023

WASHINGTON — National Native American Heritage Month honors them, and it also provides an opportunity to renew VA's commitment to improving the lives of Native Americans who served in uniform.

The Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) Loan

Guaranty Service (LGY) helps address the needs of Native American Veterans through the Native American Direct Loan (NADL) program, a special initiative that supports Native American Veterans who want to buy, build or refinance a home on federal trust land.

Created in 1992, NADL has steadily grown, opening the doors for more Native American Veterans to own homes. Some of the benefits Native American buyers receive through the NADL program include not having to provide down payments or secure private mortgage insurance, in addition to paying limited closing costs and receiving low interest rate loans.

For Native American Veterans to apply to NADL, their tribe must have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with VA. LGY has worked closely with tribal leaders to sign 111 MOUs.

The NADL team embarks on a vigorous engagement schedule each year, visiting as many tribal communities as possible, either in-person or virtually, to raise awareness on NADL benefits, and to help draft MOUs with tribal nations not yet participating in the program.

on doors and making phone calls to get new or reinstated members. Congratulations go out to Northfield and Wabasha for meeting 100% membership by November!

My fellow First District comrades, please make sure you attend your District meetings (December 2nd in Northfield, February 3rd in Rochester, and April 27th in Zumbro Falls), and don't forget the upcoming Department convention this year. Stay aware of the dates and times in your GO's. I am very excited of the great things achieved by First District! First District leads the way because we are Strong as Steel!

I want to wish everyone of my comrades a safe and happy holidays, a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

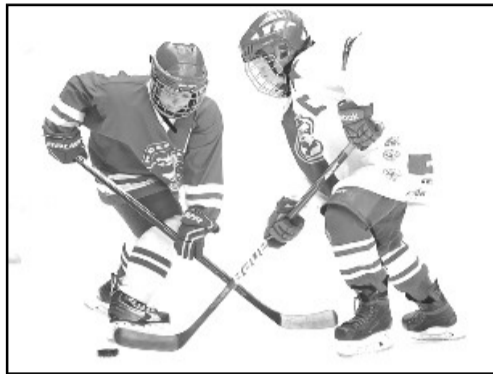
Veterans / Youth Activities

The State of Hockey

68 Year VFW Tradition Continues

By Jim Hesselgrave, VFW State Hockey Chairman

During the 2023 VFW State Fall Conference in Rochester and at the 'eleventh hour', Alexandria VFW Post 936 placed a bid for the 2024 VFW State Invitational Bantam Hockey Tournament. The bid was approved by the State Youth Activity Committee and the State Council of Administration. The dates of the VFW State Invitational Bantam Tournament are February 9 - 11, 2024 in Alexandria.



The 'standing' bid from Elk River - Rogers VFW Post 5518 for the 2024 VFW State Invitational U15A Girls Hockey Tournament was also approved. The dates of the VFW U15A Girls Tournament are March 8 - 10, 2024 in Elk River.

Due to an unbelievable Minnesota Hockey Schedule and a growing number of various Hockey Association Tournaments, it has become 'very difficult' for the Veterans of Foreign Wars to fit our VFW Hockey Tournament Program into this 'very' tight schedule! With a lot of due diligence and some hard work, the VFW State Youth Activity Committee is keeping the VFW Hockey Program alive (but struggling).

The VFW also has to contend with the growing cost of Hockey in Minnesota. The average sixteen team Hockey Tournament is running between \$35,000 to \$45,000 (this includes a Team Banquet). To help defray most of the 'out-of-pocket' expenses for the host VFW post, the VFW State Youth Activity Committee and the State Council of Administration also passed a \$2,000 VFW Post Sponsorship Fee per

participating team. Although this may be a hardship to some posts, it does help in finding a host post for the Tournaments. Thankfully, our posts have charitable gambling and need to put their funds back into the community. Although, difficult for some, it is beneficial for the VFW Hockey Program.

To help some of our sponsoring posts, we have put out the word to non-sponsoring posts. We have asked them to 'team-up' with neighboring VFW posts in the area for possible co-sponsorships. Hopefully, this effort will keep the VFW Hockey Program alive in Minnesota.

Currently, both VFW Invitational Tournaments are filling up with 'dedicated' hockey teams and they are all looking forward to what the VFW Hockey Program has to offer them.

If your post has an A Bantam, AA Bantam or U15A Girls Hockey Team in your community, please contact them and offer to sponsor them into a VFW Tournament. If you need to know more about this process, please contact Jim Hesselgrave, VFW State Hockey Chairman at: vfwmn@aol.com



VETERANS UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit www.vfwmn.org for Updates

<p>Archery 2024 <i>Open for Bids</i></p> <p>Bean Bag 2024 & 2025 Hosted by Coon Rapids #9625</p> <p>Bowling 2024 Hosted by South St. Paul #295</p> <p>Cribbage 2024 Hosted by Alexandria #936</p>	<p>Fishing 2024 <i>Open for Bids</i></p> <p>Golf 2024 & 2025 Coon Rapids #9625</p> <p>Horseshoes 2024 <i>Open for Bids</i></p> <p>Pistol April 2024 Hosted by Ballentine #246</p> <p>Trap Shooting 2024 Hosted by Granite Falls #3871</p>
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YOUTH UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit www.vfwmn.org for Updates

<p>Baseball August 2024 Hosted by St. Cloud #4847</p>	<p>Hockey Girl's March 8-10, 2024 Elk River-Rogers 5518</p> <p>Boy's February 9-11, 2024 Hosted by Alexandria #936</p>
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VFW State Golf Tournament

By Charles Hawkins, Sr. Dept. Judge Advocate

The VFW State Golf Tournament was held at Majestic Oaks Golf Club in Ham Lake on August 4-6, 2023. Coon Rapids Post 9625 sponsored the event. Their auxiliary providing most of the administration as well as working on the course.

Friday was practice day. Saturday was the qualifying day to determine you will golf with on tournament day. You can golf with your post. After completing a round of golf, everyone returned to the host

post for social time and dinner provided of by the kitchen staff. It was also announced what flight and hole you would start on.

Sunday was tournament day. After the flag was raised and the rules given out, everyone teed off. Afterwards, everyone went back to the host post for a light lunch and discovered our scores and who placed 1st, 2nd and 3rd overall.

There were 40 golfers participating, Coon Rapids Post 9625 had 22 golfers.



Vet Finally Gets Medals

With a little help from Palmer Lake Post 3915, Life Member John L. Clinton finally received his long overdue Armed Forces Expeditionary and Korean Defense Medals.

So, here's the background:

John Clinton was drafted and reported for duty in the U.S. Army on September 19, 1966. After receiving his stateside training, he received orders to join the 2nd Infantry Division Artillery in South Korea. John served as an Operations and Intelligence Specialist. While there, he was promoted to sergeant. He served a harrowing year right on the DMZ during the U.S.S. Pueblo Incident. To say that tensions along the DMZ were high is an understatement.

John was happy when his tour was up and he received his DD-214. It wasn't until he inquired about VA health care that he discovered there was no mention of his year spent in Korea along the DMZ.

It was during the 60's that Agent Orange was being used as a defoliant



Pictured: John Clinton receiving medals from Post 3915 Commander Keith Brown

in Korea. All veterans who served in Korea along the DMZ are eligible for Agent Orange benefits.

When the Palmer Lake Post heard about John's situation, they sprang into action and worked with the County Veterans Service Officer to get John a DD-215 which amended the original DD-214.

With that completed, the Army sent the overseas service and campaign medals he so rightly deserved.

Veterans helping Veterans.

Minnesota VFW Riders

By Todd "Tiny" Roberts



Comrades and Auxiliary members,

It is my pleasure to report that in September, we were approved by National VFW for the start of a new chapter of VFW Riders in District 3. Matt Martin is the new president of this group and they are busy working on recruiting and getting organized.

Also in September, the Monticello Riders gathered in Rochester to assist the Rochester Riders with recruiting and ideas for other events they can use in the future. The gathering was a great success. I am proud of the president's and vice-president's time spent organizing the weekend and all the comradery that came out of it.

As we continue to grow, I am hoping we can start having a state

wide event each summer to bring as many riders together as possible.

Unfortunately, it is that time of year that our bikes are in the process of being winterized and stored away. However, that is not going to stop the work we do for the veterans. We will be planning and organizing events for this winter and next riding season.

The VFW Riders will have our committee meeting at Midwinter Conference on Saturday morning, January 13. This is the best time for anyone to attend and ask questions such as: Am I eligible to join? Are Auxiliary members eligible?

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Midwinter Conference.

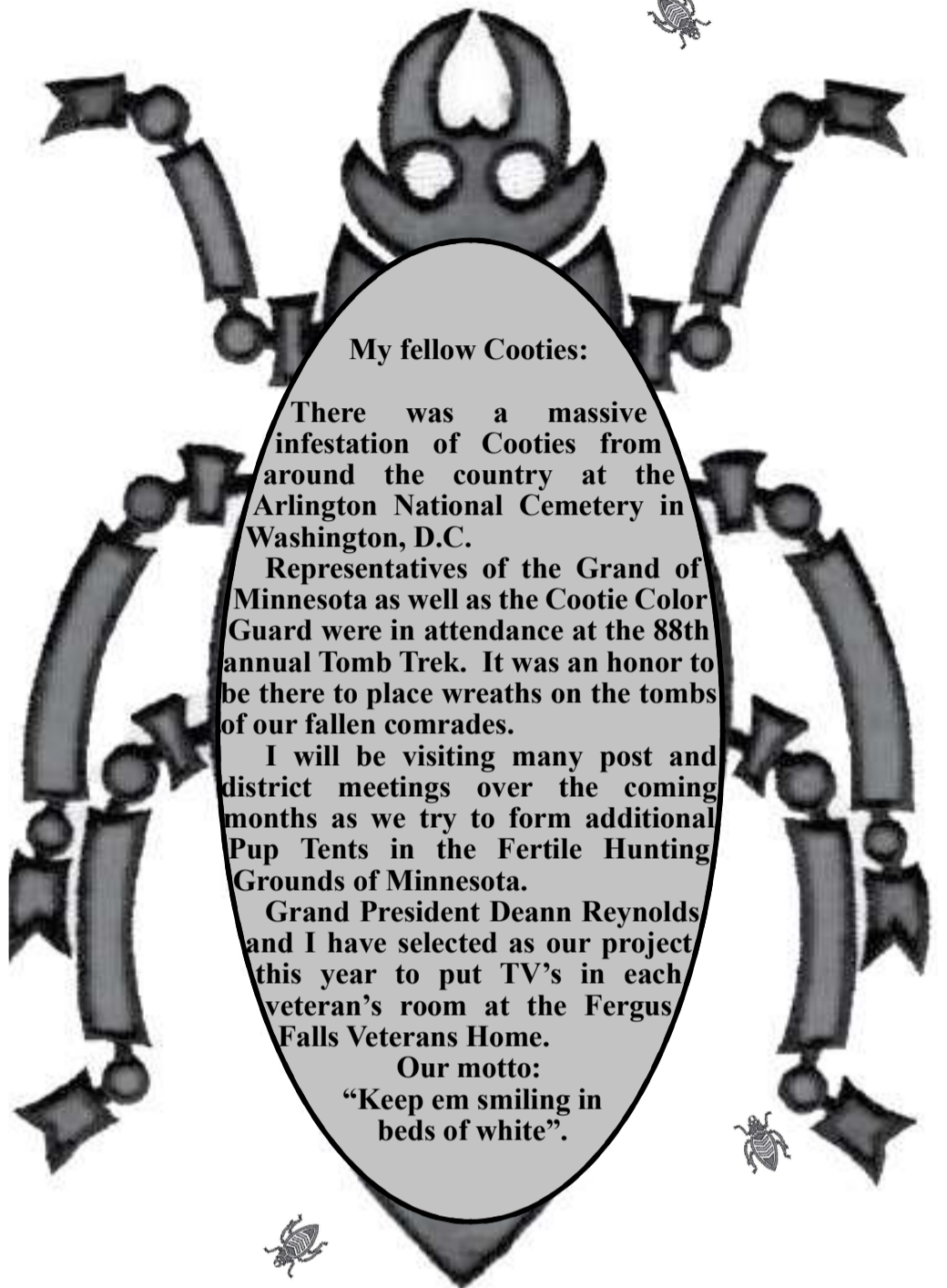


Monticello and Rochester VFW Riders gather for comradery and fellowship.

Cootie Korner

By Tim Arnold

Commander of the Grand of MN



My fellow Cooties:

There was a massive infestation of Cooties from around the country at the Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

Representatives of the Grand of Minnesota as well as the Cootie Color Guard were in attendance at the 88th annual Tomb Trek. It was an honor to be there to place wreaths on the tombs of our fallen comrades.

I will be visiting many post and district meetings over the coming months as we try to form additional Pup Tents in the Fertile Hunting Grounds of Minnesota.

Grand President Deann Reynolds and I have selected as our project this year to put TV's in each veteran's room at the Fergus Falls Veterans Home.

Our motto:

"Keep em smiling in beds of white".

Veterans do Buddy Check



Members of North Branch Post 6424 checking up on fellow post member WWII Veteran Tom Warnke (99 years young) on Veterans Day.

Timely Tidbits

David Meet Wilson

By Ken Schroeffer, editor



David Warnock (center, seated) and some of the members of Eugene H. Truax Post 4393, Northfield

David Warnock hails from Holly Springs, North Carolina and is a member of the Franklin-Sloan VFW Post 7383 of Cary, North Carolina.

He had been researching various organizations looking for an Assistance Dog for some time. He eventually selected Believet.org located in Northfield, Minnesota.

Believet™ was organized January, 2015 to provide trained service dogs, free of charge to veterans suffering from service-related injuries or disabilities. To date, Believet™ has trained and placed 50 dogs with veterans. The final training phase is done with the recipient of the dog. Northfield VFW Post 4393 has been making monthly donations to this organization for quite a while.

Once David's application was accepted, he had to wait six months for his dog to be ready to meet his needs. Before his trip to Northfield, David contacted Post Commander, Tracy Closson to tell him about his upcoming trip. After the phone conversation, Tracy called Believet™ to ask if David could meet his dog at the Post. It was agreed that it would be the perfect time for the two to meet.

Post 4393 was planning on having their evening membership dinner the day David was scheduled to arrive in Northfield. He was invited to be the honored guest. However, there was a deep secret. Only two people knew there would be a very special guest.

That night at the club, David met to his new fur friend Wilson.

David had to spend six weeks to finish Wilson's training. While he was receiving some training, David



David and his new assistance dog Wilson

was also the guest at the post's Friday Burger Basket and the Auxiliary's Smorgasbord.

After graduation from training and before leaving for home, the post had one final surprise. They were both invited to the Donuts and Coffee hour at the Post where David and Wilson were given a "Thanks For Coming to Minnesota" send off.

★★ WANTED ★★

Photos, captions and articles honoring our Century Veterans

The Gopher Oversea'r will include articles honoring the contributions of our Century Veterans in their service to our country.

The editor and staff of the Gopher Oversea'r are extremely pleased to publish any information as provided by a VFW post, friend or family member.

Send pictures, captions and stories to the VFW Office, Rice Street Station, PO Box 17146, St. Paul, MN 55117 or by email to Oversear@vfwmn.us

Photos will be returned upon request.

Trees of Minnesota

Source:

Trees of Minnesota, MN DNR, Division of Forestry, 1997

WORD SEARCH #14

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

Find the following words in the puzzle.

Words are hidden ↑ ↓ → ← and ↘ .

- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| ASPEN | COTTONWOOD | MULBERRY | RIVER BIRCH |
| BALSAM FIR | ELM | PAPER BIRCH | SILVER MAPLE |
| BASSWOOD | GREEN ASH | PIN CHERRY | SUGAR MAPLE |
| BLACK ASH | HEMLOCK | PIN OAK | TAMARACK |
| BLACK CHERRY | HICKORY | RED CEDAR | WHITE ASH |
| BLACK SPRUCE | HONEYLOCUST | RED MAPLE | WHITE CEDAR |
| BOX ELDER | JACK PINE | RED OAK | WHITE PINE |
| BUR OAK | MOUNTAIN ASH | RED PINE | WHITE SPRUCE |
| BUTTERNUT | | | |

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For more information or if you are a Vietnam Veteran and have Art Work depicting your Tour In Vietnam, and would like to display your works, please contact:

Jim Hesselgrave

Email: vfwmn@aol.com Phone: 612-599-9149

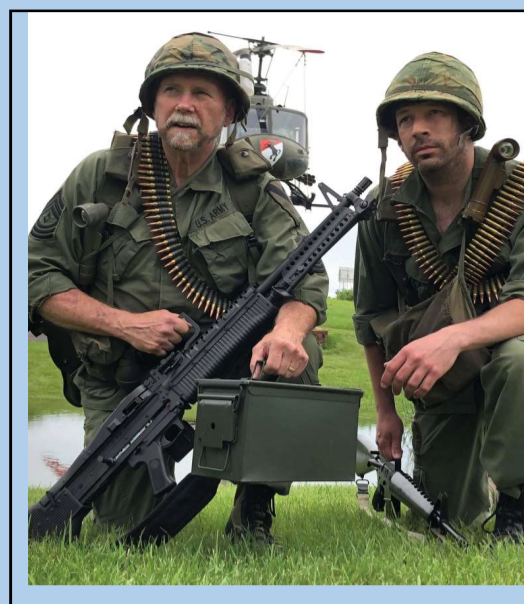
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For more information on THE BOYS of '61 see:
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Schedule your program today and help build Minnesota's BOYS of '61 Memorial!

MINNESOTA VFW CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION

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

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

- Using the form attached, 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.
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- * 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.



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

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 Treasurer of the MN VFW Charitable Association at 651-291-1757 or email us at mnvfwcharitable@gmail.com or by writing to: VFW Charitable Association, 20 W. 12th St., Room B-5, St. Paul, MN 55155.

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