

GOPHER OVERSEAS

Volume 78, NO. 2

Official Publication of the Veterans of Foreign Wars - Department of Minnesota Celebrating 103 Years 1921-2024

June 2024 - September 2024

Tuorila Elected Nat'l Surgeon General



August 1, 2024

LOUISVILLE, KY -- Dr. James R. Tuorila (Department of Minnesota) was elected National Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. on Aug. 1, 2024, at the 125th VFW National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

James served in the United States Army from 1973 to 1977, earning his VFW eligibility by serving in Korea. In recognition of his service, he received the National Defense Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Korean Defense Service Medal, and two Army Commendation Medals.

He joined the VFW in 1995 at Post 428 in St. Cloud, Minnesota, where he maintains his Gold Legacy Life membership. James has served as Post Commander, All-American District Commander and Department Surgeon. This is his fourth time serving as National Surgeon General.

James received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Bemidji State University in 1979, his Master of Arts degree from Wichita State University in 1981, and his Ph.D. from Texas Tech University in 1986. He retired from the St. Cloud VA Medical Center in St. Cloud, Minnesota, and is a retired adjunct faculty member from St. Cloud State University.

TUORILA - Cont. on Page 9

Department Fall Conference Sept. 20-22

By Cheryl Burton, Department Office Manager

The VFW Post 1639 in Willmar is proud to host the 2024 Fall Conference from September 20-22, 2024. This event presents a fantastic opportunity to explore Willmar, engage with our VFW Programs, and reconnect with friends at the Willmar Conference Center. We encourage all VFW and Auxiliary members to attend this highly educational conference.

During the conference, activities commence on September 20 with the Internal Affairs meeting at 10:30 am. At 2:30 pm, the Minnesota Gambling Control Board will conduct a seminar. Later in the evening, the VFW Council of Administration Meeting and Auxiliary Council of Administration will convene at 6:00 pm.

This conference will introduce all VFW and Auxiliary Programs for the 2024-2025 Membership

year, featuring innovative ideas and opportunities for Officers, Chairmen, and members alike. Whether you have questions about the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Auxiliary, or our Programs, this event promises to provide all the answers.

Don't miss out on this enriching experience. Mark your calendars for September 20-22, 2024, and join us in Willmar for the 2024 Fall Conference.

REGISTRATION

Registration for the Fall Conference, organized by VFW Post 1639, will be conducted at the Willmar Conference Center lobby on Friday from Noon to 4:00 pm and on Saturday from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm. During these hours, attendees can also pick up banquet tickets.

Fall Conf - Cont. on Page 7



2024-2025 State Commander David Staehlin

Member of VFW Post 8752 Cottage Grove, MN

Greetings Comrades, Sisters, and Brothers. I am honored to serve you as your VFW Minnesota State Commander for 2024-2025. We have wonderful VFW and Auxiliary leadership teams at the State, District, and Post/Auxiliary levels. For the last three years, since being elected State Judge Advocate, I have been preparing to lead the Department. I am looking forward to a productive year as we serve our members, all veterans, service members, and their families.

I am a US Navy and Air National



State Cmdr. David Staehlin makes donation to and puts pin on 2024-2025 Buddy Poppy Child Layla from the VFW Nat'l Home for Children
COMMANDER - Cont. on Page 10

125th National Convention July 27 - August 1, 2024

from www.vfw.org articles

August 1, 2024

LOUISVILLE, KY -- Alfred "Al" Lipphardt, a Georgia native and veteran of the Vietnam War, was elected today as the new national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), a congressionally chartered veterans service organization comprised of more than 1.4 million eligible veterans and military service members from all six branches of the armed forces. Lipphardt's assumption of command took place during the VFW's 125th National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

Lipphardt delivered remarks as the VFW's 116th commander-in-

chief to those attending in person at the Kentucky International Convention Center and watching via livestreaming video, at the conclusion of the weeklong gathering. Approximately 10,000 members of the VFW and its Auxiliary converged on the city to conduct the business of the organization, recognize individuals and organizations for excellence and to elect new leadership for the 2024-2025 year. The last time the VFW held its national convention in Louisville was 2013.

In his address, Lipphardt gave

NAT'L CONV - Cont. on Page 12

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Save The Date!!

National VFW Fall Legislative Committee September 9-12, 2024 Washington, DC	Big 10 Conference October 18-20, 2024 Indianapolis, IN	Minnesota Veterans Day on the Hill March, 2025 (Day TBD)
Fall Conference September 20-22, 2024 Willmar Conf. Center, Willmar	Midwinter Conference January 10-12, 2025 Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park	VFW State Hockey Tournament March, 2025 TBD

Upcoming VFW Events
Red Events are Department Events

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

Top News

MN Officers Receive All-American Honors

CONGRATULATIONS!

2022-2023 All-American Post Commander honorees from Minnesota:

- Paul Lindahl, Woodbury Post 9024, a Top 25 Post
- Paul Ollmann, Hastings Post 1210, a Top 25 Post

- Ed Keogh, Montgomery Post 5340
- Scott Kiger, Prior Lake Post 6208
- Melissa Medbery, Randall Post 9073
- Troy Stegora, Monticello Post 8731

The Veterans of Foreign Wars All-American Program acknowledges exceptional leadership in helping their level achieve growth in membership and outstanding work in key VFW scholarship programs.

The following is a list of the criteria that each District/Post needs to meet to qualify for the 2024-2025 VFW year:

District All-American Criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership must be at least 102%. • District Election Report must be submitted to National Headquarters. • Meet all the following Program Participation criteria by January 31, 2025: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voice of Democracy - minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging - Patriot's Pen - minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging
District All-American Awards	
All Districts that meet the qualifying percentage of 102% and the program participation criteria will receive an All-American District Commander Citation, All-American Streamer and be recognized in the VFW magazine.	
Top ten Districts in each division will receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-American District Streamer • All-American District Citation (cmdr.) • All-American Name Badge (cmdr.) • All-American Cap (cmdr. only) • All-American Lapel Pin (cmdr. only) • Acknowledgement during the All-American Awards Ceremony at the National Convention. 	The top two District commanders in each division will also receive five nights paid hotel stay at the VFW National Convention and reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session.
Post All-American Criteria	
* All-American Post candidates must meet all of the following criteria:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership must be at least 102%. • Post Election Report must be submitted to National Headquarters. • Meet all the following Program Participation Criteria by Jan. 31, 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voice of Democracy - minimum of one entry advanced to District judging. - Patriot's Pen - minimum of one entry advanced to District judging. - Donate to Veterans & Military Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs Services, minimum of \$125 • A Post must submit a community service report quarterly to their department for submission to the All-American Dashboard. The quarters are July-Sept., Oct.-Dec., Jan-Mar, and Apr.-June. One of these community service activities must be for the VFW Day of Service. • Must purchase a minimum of 500 Buddy Poppies.
Post All-American Awards	
* All posts that meet the qualifying percentage of 102% and the program participation criteria will receive an All-American Banner, Post Streamer and be recognized in the VFW magazine.	
* The top 15 Posts in each Division will receive:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgment in <i>VFW</i> magazine • Acknowledgment during the All-American Awards Ceremony at the National Convention • All-American Post citation • All-American Post streamer • All-American citation - cmdr. • All-American name badge - cmdr. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-American cap (cmdr. only) • All-American lapel pin (cmdr. only). • The top five commanders in each division will also receive five nights paid hotel stay at the VFW National Convention and reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session.

Special Message to At-Large VFW Members

As the new Commander of the VFW in Minnesota, I wanted to give a personal thanks to our At-Large members.

While we encourage members to join a local post and to be involved as their time and interests may permit, we understand that some members prefer to remain an At-Large member for various reasons.

Please be assured that you are our comrades and that we don't take your membership for granted. Your At-Large membership benefits your comrades, other veterans, service members, and their families in several ways.

Your annual or life membership dues fund our programs at the National and State levels; increases the grant we receive from the State of Minnesota to help fund our Veterans Claims Office; and helps increase our impact when we advocate for veterans at the Minnesota Legislature and with Congress.

We hope you enjoy receiving

the VFW Magazine and our Gopher Oversea'r newspaper. If you're looking for some camaraderie, you are certainly welcome to frequent the clubrooms of our posts with a post home.

You can purchase VFW-branded clothing and other items at www.vfwstore.org and display your pride in membership as not all veterans are eligible for the VFW.

To easily renew your annual membership, convert to life member, or participate in the Legacy Life program, please visit www.vfw.org/renew or contact State Quartermaster Barry Henriksen at 651-291-1757.

To locate a local Post to visit or for a possible transfer, visit www.vfw.org/find-a-post, call our VFW State Headquarters at 651-291-1757, or email State Quartermaster Barry Henriksen at quartermaster@vfwmn.us.

Thank you again for your membership and support.

Veteran's Day is November 11

Are you and/or your Post prepared to honor those who served their country in war or peace - living or dead?



Minnesota VFW Office Locations

Department Headquarters:

Barry Henriksen, Adjutant/QM
 B5 Veterans Service Building
 20 West 12th Street
 St. Paul, MN 55155
 Phone: (651) 291-1757
 Fax: (651) 291-2753
 Email: adjutant@vfwmn.us
 Webpage: www.vfwmn.org

Department Claims Office:

Jon Gohn, Claims Director
 Whipple Federal Building, G900
 1 Federal Drive
 St. Paul, MN 55111
 Phone: (612) 970-5669
 Fax: (612) 970-5404

Auxiliary Headquarters :

Veterans Service Building
 20 West 12th Street
 St. Paul, MN 55155
 Phone: (651) 291-1759
 Fax: (651) 291-7932

Minneapolis VA

Jeffrey Cowell
 VFW Hospital Representative
 Minneapolis VAMC
 1 Veterans Drive- Room 4G- 109E
 Phone: (612) 725-4448

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Department of Minnesota, VFW, Editor
 Rice Street Station, P.O. Box 17146, Saint Paul, MN 55117
 Phone: (651) 291-1757 - Fax: (651) 291-2753
 Email: Oversear@vfwmn.us - Webpage: www.vfwmn.org

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

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Upcoming deadlines are July 15, November 15, and March 15

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

Please Note the below address change: (Please Print)

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____
 State and Zip: _____
 Post Number: _____

2023-2024 Department Officers

Senior Vice Commander

By Ed Keogh, State Senior Vice Commander

Thank you all for believing in me as I travel up the ladder in the Department of MN. I greatly appreciate your vote of confidence by electing me to the position of Senior Vice Commander.

I have been assigned the Department Community Service Chair again. I am here to assist any Post with issues you may have reporting Community Service Reports on the Dashboard. Please contact me by phone (952-334-2128) or email: ekeoghvr24@gmail.com.

I have also been assigned as the Department Membership Chair. I have a team of two vice chairs to assist me with membership they are: Gary Carlberg and Judge Advocate Mary Thompson. Let's all work together to achieve our goal of 102% membership for 2024-2025. You can view the Minnesota Department Membership program on our website (vfwmn.org). We all know we need to recruit members and to retain members. Here are some ideas on

how to do that: participate in our VFW programs, recruiting events, Memorial Day and Veterans Day activities. Publish what you do in your local newspapers and on social media to let the public know what the VFW is all about. This will educate potential members of the great things the VFW Posts do for their communities, schools, veterans and active service members.

Post commanders, if your post has an auxiliary, please work together with them for the betterment of the VFW. Districts, if you do not have joint meetings with your district auxiliary as part of your district meetings, please start at your next district meeting. I know there are Districts that have joint meetings where joint program reports are presented. Communication is the key to working together.

I look forward to visiting with most of you as I travel throughout the State of MN attending District meetings and other functions.

Junior Vice Commander

By Charles Hawkins, Sr., State Junior Vice Commander

Comrades, I would like to take this opportunity to tell you how thrilled I am to have been elected to the position of Department of Minnesota Jr. Vice Commander. This coming year will be an exciting step for me as I am presented with new responsibilities and experiences. I am here to assist the Department Commander, his other line officers, chairmen, and office staff whenever possible.

I'll be visiting various district meetings this coming year, as in the past year. I must say that every meeting that I attended last year was a joy. The professionalism of

the District Commanders and their line officers was second to none. The officers and post commanders covered the majority of the items that I wanted to cover. A job well done.

I look forward to meeting and working with each district's new corps of officers.

As always, I'm here to help you in any way that I can. If I don't have an answer, then I'll find out for you or direct you in the right direction to get the correct answer. My phone is always on; however, sometimes, I can't answer, so please leave me a message.

Judge Advocate

By Mary Thompson, State Judge Advocate

Congratulations to all newly elected 2024-2025 post, district, and department officers across our great state! I wish you all a very successful year. I look forward to working with all of our members. It's going to be a great year working with and supporting our newly elected Department Commander, David Staehlin. David's willingness

to share his knowledge, wisdom, and perception of VFW policy and procedures to our membership will no doubt move our organization into the future.

As this new VFW year begins, we must continue to communicate with each other, continue our mission of recruiting new members, reinstating those members who have drifted

away, and inspiring those members who continue to serve our veterans even today. Let them know we are a family-oriented organization that not only supports our veterans, but our communities as well. Let's make a difference and build membership to include all generations. Diversity will keep our membership strong and keep our voice heard to help push legislative goals set by the National VFW and get and keep the benefits we have all earned and deserve.

If your post/district is in the process of updating its bylaws, be sure to have the latest copy of the National and Department Bylaws to use as a reference. If you do not have post bylaws, remember this has been implemented as a requirement. The Department VFW and National VFW web sites have a post bylaws template available for you and will give you a great starting off point. If

your post has updated its bylaws this past year, keep in mind that they do not become effective until approved by the National VFW. Please do not send your bylaws directly to National. They need to be reviewed by the Department first. Once approved by Department, they will then be forwarded on to National for approval.

In closing, I am honored to be a part of this team. I would like to thank everyone for their support this year as I set out on this journey in becoming your State Judge Advocate. It will be my privilege to work with all of you this year. I am committed to the "grass roots" of our organization by making sure that we all have access to mentorship. This will help ensure that our organization will continue to have its strong foundations on into the future.

Minnesota VFW Council of Administration

Auxiliary to the VFW Council of Administration

Officer	Home City	Home Post
Commander David Staehlin	Cottage Grove	Post #8752
Sr. Vice Commander Edward Keogh	Montgomery	Post #5340
Jr. Vice Commander Charles Hawkins	Coon Rapids	Post #9652
Quartermaster Barry Henriksen	White Bear Lake	Post #1782
Adjutant Barry Henriksen	White Bear Lake	Post #1782
Judge Advocate Mary Thompson	Aurora	Post #8144
Surgeon Dr. James Tuorila	St. Cloud	Post #428
Chaplain Scott Hansen	Brooklyn Park	Post #3915
Chief of Staff Barry Henriksen	White Bear Lake	Post #1782
Member at Large Barry Henriksen	White Bear Lake	Post #1782
Chief Inspector Darrin Ewing	Woodbury	Post #9024
Past Commander Dan Meyer	Gibbon	Post #8459
Officer of the Day Donald Heuer	Litchfield	Post #9433
Nat'l Council Mbr. Dale Hoogeveen	Carver	Post #1791
MOC Grand Cmdr. Todd Roberts	Monticello	Post #8731
1st District Cmdr. Lowell Lyman	Zumbrota	Post #5727
2nd District Cmdr. Maria Maldonado	Chaska	Post #1791
3rd District Cmdr. Merle Rabenberg	Wilmont	Post #2603
4th District Cmdr. Sean Gustafson	Roseville	Post #7555
5th District Cmdr. Lee Christopherson	Osakis	Post #7902
6th District Cmdr. Donald Lohse	Backus	Post #1647
7th District Cmdr. Denis Maddox	St. Michael	Post #5518
8th District Cmdr. Anthony Rechichi	Ely	Post #2717
9th District Cmdr. Kelly Booge	Bemidji	Post #1260

Officer	Home City	Home Aux
President Karen England	Lake City	Aux #8729
Sr. Vice President Julie Stoehr	Cook	Aux #1757
Jr. Vice President Paige Amundson	Wheaton	Aux #1656
Secretary/Treasurer Laurie Dale	Kenyon	Aux #141
Chaplain Jean Keogh	Montgomery	Aux #5340
Conductress Nanci Bohmer	Circle Pines	Aux #246
Guard Ron Vaughn	Monticello	Aux #8731
Chief of Staff Paige Amundson	Wheaton	Aux #1656
1st District President Kris Kohn	Spring Valley	Aux #4114
2nd District President Becky Selleck	Waconia	Aux #5462
3rd District President Diane Rabenberg	Wilmont	Aux #2603
4th District President Carol Kratz	White Bear Lake	Aux #1782
5th District President Cindi Nelson	Alexandria	Aux #936
6th District President Deb Wieshalla	Browerville	Aux #8391
7th District President Peg Snoko	Richfield	Aux #5555
8th District President Marlaina Hart	Iron	Aux #4456
9th District President Shirley Quist	New York Mills	Aux #3289
Past Department Presidents on Council:		
PDP Paige Amundson	Madison	Aux #1656
PDP Jamie Cassavant	Crookston	Aux #1902
PDP Sonia Tatge	Kenyon	Aux #141
PDP Dave Scofield	Litchfield	Aux #2818

Minnesota Auxiliary News



**STATE PRESIDENT
VFW Auxiliary**

Karen England

Member of
VFW Post 8729 Auxiliary
Lake City, MN



It is a great time to be a VFW Auxiliary Member in Minnesota!

The National VFW "Ladies" Auxiliary was established in 1914, and on January 23, 1925, the Veterans of Foreign Wars "Ladies" Auxiliary in Minnesota began with the granting of the Department Charter with the foundation of 13 local Auxiliaries. Florence Hiland served as our first Auxiliary President in 1925-1926. The term "Ladies" was removed from the original name in 2015 when membership in the VFW Auxiliary was expanded to include male spouses and family members of eligible members. Today, Minnesota has nearly 18,000 members representing 117 auxiliaries.

January 7, 2025, also serves as another 100-year milestone celebration of the beginning of our VFW National Home. It began with the vision of a 23 year old woman named Amy Ross who was working to find jobs for thousands of unemployed veterans in Detroit, Michigan in 1922. Her efforts were recognized by a millionaire who donated 472 acres of land near Eaton Rapids, Michigan, and the VFW National Home was born. In the spring of 1925, the first family moved in, comprised of a military widow and her six children.

Over the past almost 100 years, the National Home has expanded and continued to serve the changing needs of military veterans and their families. If you have not visited,

please consider doing so, and please consider becoming a Life Member and financially supporting the National Home as you are able. More information may be found on their website: vfnationalhome.org.

I am honored to continue to serve the VFW and its Auxiliary. I was installed as the Department of Minnesota VFW Auxiliary President on Father's Day, and will continue to serve into our 100th Year, alongside our VFW State Commander David Staehlin.

I am a Life Member of Bernard Flesche Auxiliary to Post #8729, in Lake City, Minnesota, and am eligible for membership under the service of my grandpa who served in the Navy in WWII. My other grandpa served as a Marine in WWII. My father was in the Army during the Vietnam War, and I have a cousin currently serving in the Coast Guard.

The spirit and vision of two women, back in 1925, marked the beginnings for the last century of dedication and accomplishments for the VFW Auxiliary in Minnesota and the VFW National Home. Our goals include engaging the next generation of veterans and their families to continue the great works that have already been accomplished in serving and supporting our military, veterans, and their families.

THANK YOU for YOUR service to this great country and fighting for our freedoms!

National District Council

By Frankie Bill, Member Area E

Comrades and Members, we are about to embark on the VFW and Auxiliary National Convention hosted in Louisville, Kentucky. This will be the 125th year of a National Convention for the VFW and the 111th year for the VFW Auxiliary. On deck for the business of the Auxiliary, there are 15 resolutions proposed for the 2024-2025 term. You may find them all behind the MALTA login. Click on the Members Resources tab and then select "National Convention" from the vertical listing located on the left-hand side and then open the folder "2024 Proposed Resolutions." Your vote matters! Please familiarize yourself with the content and partner with your auxiliary to bring their vote to the National Convention floor. Also, check out exciting events like the 2nd annual Corn Hole tournament. There is at least one

Minnesota team entered and hoping to cheer #teamwingmen on! Also, don't miss the Patriotic Rally. This includes a fun-filled, energetic parade with the VFW and Auxiliary delegations from all over the world donning their red, white, and blue.

Congratulations to Commander David and President Karen on their year ahead. The Minnesota VFW Auxiliary will be celebrating its centennial or 100th year during the 2024-2025 term. This is an exciting time for the organization and the state of Minnesota! I know they will do great things together as they focus on growing membership and investing in core programs focused on the betterment of all Veterans, families, and surrounding communities. I look forward to seeing everyone at Fall Conference in Willmar.

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 !!

THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
SERVICE

Treasurer/Secretary Chair

By Laurie Dale

Greetings everyone

If your VFW Auxiliary has elected a new treasurer, please make sure you send Form 8822B to the IRS. This form lets the IRS know there has been a change in the "responsible party" for your VFW Auxiliary. The form is available in MALTA under the Duties tab in the Treasurer Resources section. You should also fill out this form if your treasurer has a change in name, address, etc.

If your auxiliary has changed banks, please make sure you update that information in the MALTA system so that appropriate deposits may be made into your account from National HQ.

It is not necessary to send a copy of your bond to the Department Office if you are bonding through the National Organization.... only

when using an outside company is it necessary for you to send a copy of your bond to the Department Office. Bonds purchased from a source other than National require Council approval. Bonds must be purchased in the amount of DOUBLE the amount of your Auxiliary assets and no later than August 31, 2024.

990N e-postcards are due by November 15. A copy of your acceptance is needed in the Department VFW Auxiliary HQ Office. If your auxiliary files a tax return, you do not need to complete the 990N, but we need a copy of your return on file in place of the 990N. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO PAY ANYTHING TO FILE THE 990N ONLINE! If you are trying to complete the 990N e-postcard online and someone is trying to charge

you a fee to do it.... you are on the wrong website! We are unable to file the 990N for individual auxiliaries. This is the sole responsibility of the Auxiliary.

To remain a member in good standing and to be in compliance with the National Bylaws, Section 807: Term of Office - the dues of all officers must be paid by December 31.

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

Jon Gohn, Claims Director

VFW Recommends TAP Class Reform

from the VFW Magazine, 2024 June/July issue

July 10, 2024

In a March House VA Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity hearing, VFW offered insight into the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and addressed a proposal aimed at enhancing the process.

VFW National Legislative Deputy Director Kristina Keenan highlighted several critical aspects of TAP-related legislation. Keenan said VFW supports provisions that will improve transition services for troops leaving the military. She added that it is important to include accredited claims representatives, such as VFW service officers, in the TAP process.

"This would enable service members to have a point of contact to begin their pre-separation claim," Keenan said. "We also support the bill's inclusion of pre-enrollment in VA medical care during transition. This would provide veterans with their earned benefits the day they leave the military."

Keenan told Congress that VFW works with about 10 percent of the troops who attend TAP sessions.

"We strongly believe there needs to be accountability for [the Department of Defense] to follow the law," Keenan said. "Commanders should be held responsible for ensuring their transitioning service members attend TAP in a timely

manner."

Furthermore, Keenan expressed VFW's support for the proposed legislation's inclusion of pre-enrollment in VA medical care during transition. This provision would enable veterans to access their entitled benefits immediately upon leaving the military, facilitating a smoother transition into civilian life, she said.

"This draft bill also includes reports that would ensure regular updates on critical aspects of transition, such as timeliness, attendance, pathway participation and frequency of participation," Keenan testified. "The VFW has spoken about the elements in this proposed legislation during numerous hearings before this subcommittee and before the Senate."

In her testimony, Keenan underscored the VFW's commitment to advocating for legislation that enhances veterans' well-being and ensures they receive the support they deserve. The VFW's endorsement of these proposals reflects a broader effort to address the evolving needs of veterans and improve their overall transition experience.

"We hope this subcommittee engages with us to help refine this proposal to ensure it provides the great resources it intends," Keenan said.

VA Providing more care and Benefits to Women Veterans than Ever

June 12, 2024

WASHINGTON — Today, on Women Veterans Recognition Day, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that more than 53,000 women Veterans enrolled in VA health care between May 2023 and May 2024, marking a 20% increase over the previous year and the largest enrollment year for women Veterans on record.

Health care enrollment of women Veterans increased across all 50 states, with the greatest number of enrollments in: Texas (6,507), Florida (4,666), California (4,318), Virginia (3,806), Georgia (2,937) and North Carolina (2,776). Women Veterans are currently VA's fastest growing patient population. This historic enrollment of women Veterans into VA health care and benefits is driven in large part by the PACT Act, which President Biden signed into law in August 2022, empowering VA to deliver record health care and benefits to millions of Veterans exposed to toxins while serving in the military.

Expanding access to benefits and services for women Veterans is a key priority for VA and the entire Biden-Harris administration. This is critical because Veterans who come to VA are proven to do better. VA health care has consistently outperformed non-VA care in Veteran trust, patient satisfaction scores, overall quality ratings, and affordability.

"On this day in 1948, women were granted a formal place in our country's military. Today, the more than 2 million women Veterans living in the U.S. make up our fastest growing Veteran population," said VA Deputy Secretary Tanya Bradsher. "It's important to all of us here at VA that every woman Veteran knows she belongs at VA."

"It's our goal for every woman Veteran to receive all the benefits she has earned, and that includes world-class health care," said VA Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D. "We want women Veterans to know that VA has invested in more services for women Veterans than ever before. VA can now offer

women the best and most accessible options for all their care needs, and we want them to apply for the health care they deserve today."

VA is leading the way in specialized health care for women Veterans. VHA's Office of Women's Health oversees these dedicated health care services. Today, there is a women's health program led by a Women Veterans Program Manager at every VA health care system across the nation. Additional specialized women's health staff include: Women's Health Medical Directors, Women's Health Primary Care Providers, Women's Health Patient Aligned Care Teams, Maternity Care Coordinators, Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Coordinators, and Women's Mental Health Champions. Women's health teams are also supported by LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinators, Intimate Partner Violence Coordinators, and Military Sexual Trauma Coordinators.

Over the past two years, VA has dramatically expanded health care services dedicated to women Veterans. This includes expanded breast cancer screenings and mammograms for Veterans with potential toxic exposures, increased access to reproductive health services, and expanded maternity care coordination for Veterans from pregnancy through 12 months postpartum. All of this work contributes to VA's equity action plan and broader efforts to ensure that every Veteran gets the care and benefits they deserve.

VA is also delivering disability compensation benefits to an all-time record number of women Veterans, with 717,141 women Veterans receiving disability compensation benefits today. Over the past five years, an additional 197,667 women Veterans have begun receiving benefits, representing a 28% increase. More than 89% of women Veterans who have applied have received disability benefits from VA for at least one condition, on average receiving \$27,109 in earned disability compensation benefits per year.

Vet Crisis Line Supports More Vets Than Ever

July 16, 2024

WASHINGTON — Two years ago, the launch of Dial 988 then Press 1 made it easier than ever for Veterans and their loved ones to access lifesaving support via the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Crisis Line. In these past two years, VCL has answered more than 1,638,138 calls, representing a 22.7% increase in calls per day since the launch. This means that more Veterans than ever are getting the support they need from caring, qualified responders during times of crisis.

Dial 988 then Press 1 provides an easy-to-remember number to quickly connect Veterans, service members, and their loved ones to the Veterans Crisis Line's lifesaving services. Since the launch of the shortened number, VCL has maintained an average speed to answer of 9.17 seconds. In addition to the increase

in calls answered, VCL has also received a 76.7% increase in texts and 27.5% increase in chats per day over the same two years.

"Our Veterans Crisis Line has been providing Veteran-centered support for nearly two decades, and two years ago we made it even easier for Veterans in crisis and their loved ones to reach out for help by launching Dial 988 then Press 1," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "One Veteran lost to suicide is one too many. We're supporting more Veterans than ever through the 988 initiative and will not rest in our continued efforts to spread the word that this resource is available and saves lives."

Today, more than 1,000 responders — many of whom are Veterans themselves — ensure that every Veteran has somebody to call for support in time of crisis.

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

Message From Your National Council Member

By Dale Hoogeveen,
National Council Member

Our 2024-25 year is well underway with leaders at all levels having been elected, installed and carrying out the business of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I congratulate all those recognized with All-State and All-American honors – challenging to attain and reflect utmost credit on your post, your district and the Department of Minnesota.

One of the most significant accomplishments in the history of the VFW was the passage into law of the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, better known as the PACT Act. The Act was signed by President Biden on August 10, 2022, and initially named 23 specific conditions for which veterans and their families will not need to prove service connection to obtain medical treatment and/or disability compensation as a result of toxic exposures so many suffered.

The list of presumptive conditions continues to grow and includes coverage for Vietnam era veterans as well. Signing the bill was only the first step as the Veterans Administration became responsible for informing veterans and their families of their eligibility for benefits and services, for processing the claims of those affected by toxic exposure, and for training VA and non-VA health care providers to assess the effects of environmental exposures.

On March 5, 2024, the VA expanded health care to millions of veterans – years earlier than required by the PACT Act. This is the work the VFW tirelessly does daily and must be part of the message we deliver to veterans eligible for membership in the VFW as we work to recruit, reinstate and retain. If a veteran asks, “What’s in it for me?”, share the fact that benefits delivered by the VA are often as the result of the relentless efforts by the federally chartered veteran service organizations to ensure the veteran community and their families are cared for compassionately to the highest professional standard.

If you have any questions regarding the PACT Act, I encourage you to contact your County Veterans Services Officer, our VFW Claims Office or call the Veterans Administration at 1-800-698-2411. Additional information can be found at <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/#gulf-war-era-and-post-911-vete>

What can you do to support our efforts? Subscribe to the VFW Action Corps newsletter and take action when requested to contact your

Don't Fear Change

By David Staehlin, State Commander

Change for change's sake can sometimes be good. It can create a renewed energy or passion, pique interest, and increase productivity. But change should be considered carefully to avoid disrupting successful current processes and inadvertently decreasing productivity.

As we proceed through the 2024-2025



program and leadership year, I encourage our members to consider new approaches and views. Sometimes, the way we've been doing something is the best option but be willing to consider alternatives. And don't avoid considering alternatives just because change might require some effort. It may very well be worth it.

Adjutant/Quartermaster

By Barry Henriksen, State Adjutant/Quartermaster

Welcome to 2024-2025.

Congratulations to all elected officers at the Post, District, and Department level!

This year we have raised the assessments for the Hospital Recreation and National Home from \$60 to \$100. This is due to the increase in the number of Homes and Hospitals that we support. There are now 12 Homes and Hospitals. This way we can still give every one of them at least \$1,000. Thank you to the posts that have already made this adjustment.

Every Post officer should have an email address with National's Online Membership System (OMS). You can

manage your own account. An email address on an election report is what gives you appropriate access to OMS and the Dashboard. And email is how the Department office communicates with your post and sends out the General Orders. So please make sure you have a current email address on file with Department and National.

Audits need to be on time and accurate. Posts that are delinquent and inaccurate are subject to suspension. We don't want to suspend posts, but audits are critical. If you need help, ask for it. Start with your District first.

See you in Willmar!



Neville-Lien VFW Post 1287, Winona, proudly announced that Roger Reitmaier served as the Grand Marshal of the Winona Steamboat Days Parade.

Roger retired as a Lieutenant Colonel from the USMCR in 1994 and became a life member of Post 1287. He initially created and then for 30 years remained the coordinator of Winona's 24-Hour Veteran's Day

Vigil at Veterans Memorial Park.

The Veterans Vigil has always been about honoring our Military Veterans. Initially, only veterans stood watch. Currently, police officers, firefighters, high school seniors and families of deceased veterans stand watch to honor interned veterans.

A very distinct honor recognizing what Roger Reitmaier has done for the community of Winona.

United States Representatives and Senators. When we don't demonstrate our desire to see legislation passed, our leaders don't make it a priority. Please sign up at <https://voterveice.net/VFW/register> and encourage all who support the veteran community to do the same. You do not have to be a member of the VFW or Auxiliary to support our mission.

My first year as a National Council member was educational, enjoyable and professionally rewarding as I supported Commander-in-Chief Sarmiento and his officers to ensure the VFW remains a powerful voice for all veterans and their families.

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to continue to serve!

VFW National Home

By Curtis Hermanson,
National Home Chairman

The National Home's Annual Meeting will be held in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, October 26, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. EST., in accordance with the VFW National Home Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, Article 1, Section 5.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The Annual Meeting is held to certify the election of two trustees by the National Home life members. There is one open trustee position in District 7 (Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin & Minnesota) and District 11 (Arizona, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada). Each position is for a six-year term, ending in October 2030.

ELECTION BALLOTS

Ballots will be sent (email or text) to those life members whose VFW or VFW Auxiliary affiliation is in the National Home's District 7 and District 11. The ballots must be received at the VFW National Home no later than close of business on September 30th, 2024, per Article V, Section 4 of the VFW National Home Bylaws.

MN VFW Bus Trip to the National Home

At the 2024 State Convention, the MN VFW Charitable Association agreed to make a donation towards the cost of a renting a bus to transport members to the Annual Meeting.

Watch for more information in the Department General Orders as more details become available on pricing and exact dates.

This opportunity will be on a first come first serve basis (limited to the first 35 people). Apply promptly.

Convention Committee Report

By Scott Bill and the Convention Committee Team

Happy summer VFW and Auxiliary members.

Thank you to all who joined us for our summer convention.

As we turn our attention to Fall Conference, a gentle reminder the Willmar Post and Auxiliary will be our host so please help us by registering for this wonderful learning conference in beautiful Willmar. I personally love making the drive out west. My grandparents where from the area and I spent many

a childhood day in Montevideo.

Additionally, if you have any recommendations for locations, please send them directly to me or Cheryl at HQ. We are still actively searching for additional locations with hotel and meeting room capacity to host either our fall conferences or summer conventions. Enjoy the rest of your summer and I look forward to being together with you this Fall.

Thank you, Willmar, for hosting this event - much appreciated.

Fall Conference - September 20-22, 2024

CONF. - Cont. from Page 1

SCHOOLS OF INSTRUCTION AND SEMINARS

VFW and Auxiliary members will have exciting opportunities to learn more about the VFW Programs. Classes will be held on Saturday from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. We encourage Commanders, Presidents, Quartermasters, Treasurers, Chairpersons, and all members to attend as many instructional sessions and seminars as possible. Topics include Membership, Community Service, Youth Activities, and the Quartermaster School, as well as seminars like Patriotic Art. Many sessions are designed for different interests and levels of involvement at this year's Fall Conference.

Attending these sessions is important for the success of our VFW and Auxiliary Programs next year. Please ensure someone from your Post or Auxiliary attends all meetings. They can gather information to share with members who couldn't make it. You can find the full schedule of classes and seminars in your Post and Auxiliary General Orders, on the VFW Department website at www.vfwmn.org, and at the event itself.

COMMITTEE DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITS

On Saturday, September 21st, from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm, the Display and Exhibit area will be open in Gallery 7. Members can explore various displays showcasing VFW and Auxiliary Programs, Veterans Homes, and related initiatives. It's a great opportunity for everyone to

gather information and samples. Post Commanders and Quartermasters aiming for ALL-STATE honors should visit the membership Display area and sign in on the provided sheets.

COMMANDER and STATE PRESIDENT'S INFORMAL DINNER

This year, the annual Fall Conference Banquet will be an informal dinner with not assigned seating and held in the Willmar Conference Center on Saturday, September 21st. Social time starts at 5:45 pm in the Atrium and Dinner starts at 7:00 pm. The Commander's and President's Dinner is open to all members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Auxiliary. The cost is \$36 per person. It is suggested that you order your tickets as soon as possible through the Willmar VFW Post 1639, Attn: Jesse Hyatt, 1108 Hwy. 12 SE, Willmar, MN 56201. Order forms have been included in all VFW and Auxiliary General Orders. Additional information and an order form have been printed in this issue of the Gopher Oversea'r and online at: www.vfwmn.org

SUNDAY COUNCIL MEETING

If you're staying overnight on Saturday during the Fall Conference, consider attending the Council of Administration meeting. This meeting will conclude the final business of the 2024 Fall Conference for the Department of Minnesota, VFW. The VFW Council meeting begins at 9:00 am on Sunday, September 22nd.



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS - DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA



VFW FALL CONFERENCE

September 20-22, 2024

Willmar Conference Center,
240 23rd Street SE, Willmar, MN
(Rev. 7-1-2024) Tentative

FRIDAY, September 20, 2024

9:00 - 10:00am	Pre-Convention Committee	Boardroom
10:30 - 11:30am	Internal Affairs Committee	Boardroom
NOON - 4:00pm	Host Registration VFW & Aux Pick up program book & Banquet Tickets	Atrium
1:00 - 2:00pm	Finance Committee	Boardroom
2:30 - 4:00pm	Gambling Meeting	Gallery 7
3:30 - 4:30pm	MNVFW Charitable Association	Boardroom
6:00 - 8:30pm	VFW Council of Administration	Gallery 7
6:00 - 9:30pm	Auxiliary Council of Administration	Galleries 1-4
After Meetings	Hospitality Rooms	Poolside

SATURDAY, September 21, 2024

7:00 - 1:00pm	Host Registration VFW & Aux	Atrium
8:00 - 3:00pm	Seminars/Hands-on Instruction VFW Classes Aux Classes	Galleries 1-4 Galleries 5 & 6
8:00 - 3:30pm	Program Exhibits/Poppy Contest Exhibit set up from 7 - 7:45 am Dept. Chairs please staff your Displays from 2 - 2:45pm	Gallery 7
4:30 - 5:30pm	Catholic Mass Protestant Service	Gallery 4 Gallery 2
6:00 - 6:45pm	General Reception	Atrium
7:00 - 9:30pm	Banquet Doors open at 6:45pm Hospitality Rooms Closed during Banquet	Galleries 5-7

SUNDAY, September 22, 2024

9:00 - 11:00am	VFW Council of Administration	Gallery 7
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HOUSING RESERVATIONS

***** BOOK EARLY *****

September 20-22, 2024 DEADLINE August 30, 2024

Call hotel of choice to make your reservations. Simply follow instructions below and have your credit card ready when you call the hotel. Seminars held in Conference Center.

Willmar VFW Post 1639 is the Host Post. You can call the post at 320-235-9811 or email at post1639qm@outlook.com with any questions or call Cheryl at Dept. HQ 651-291-1757.

Best Western Plus
2100 US Hwy 12, Willmar
Pool & Free Breakfast

Rate: 129/+Tax

*Check-in 3 pm/Out 11am

Arrival Date: _____

Departure Date: _____

Get Credit Card Ready

- One Bed \$129/night
 Two Bed \$129/night

Share with: _____

Handicap? _____
Near Elevator? _____
OTHER? _____

CALL Best Western to Reserve:
1-320-235-6060
Say "VFW Fall Conference"

Holiday Inn Express
250 23rd Street SE, Willmar
Pool & Free Breakfast

Rate: \$139/+Tax
Suites: \$169/+Tax

*Check-in 3 pm/Out 11am

Arrival Date: _____

Departure Date: _____

Get Credit Card Ready

- One Bed \$139/night
 Two Bed \$139/night
 Suite \$169/night

Share with: _____

Handicap? _____
Near Elevator? _____
OTHER? _____

CALL Holiday Inn to Reserve:
1-320-231-2601
Say "VFW Fall Conference"

Country Inn/Suites
201 28th Ave SE, Willmar
Free Breakfast

Rate: 139.99 night/+Tax

*Check-in 3 pm/Out 11am

Arrival Date: _____

Departure Date: _____

Get Credit Card Ready

- One Bed \$139.99/night
 Two Bed \$139.99/night

Share with: _____

Handicap? _____
Near Elevator? _____
OTHER? _____

CALL Country Inn to Reserve:
1-320-214-0300
Say "VFW Fall Conference"

Fall Conference Casual Dinner Event

Saturday, September 21, 2024

Tickets \$36/person (No Refunds)

Reception 6pm Dinner 7pm

Deadline: Friday September 6, 2024

Menu: To be determined

Banquet/Dinner Tables seat 10 people

No assigned seating

(Tickets will be at the Registration Table. They will not be mailed out)

Mail Order Form to: **Willmar VFW Post #1639**
Attn: Jesse Hyatt
1108 Hwy 12 SE
Willmar, MN 56201

Reserve _____ Tickets at \$36 each. Check # _____

Name: _____

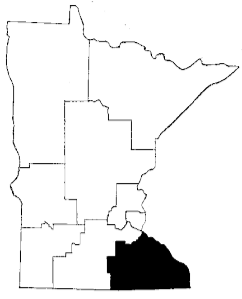
Email: _____

Phone: _____ Post/Auxiliary # _____ District # _____

Special Dietary Request: _____

Limited Mobility Request: _____

News from YOUR District Commanders and Presidents!



**Lowell Lyman, Commander
First District**

Greetings 1st District Comrades and Auxiliary. First I want to let everyone know how honored I am to be entrusted to fill the office of 1st District Commander. I look forward to the challenges and rewards of the upcoming year. Congratulations to Dave Staehlin, Department of MN Commander and all of the elected and appointed officers for the upcoming year.

At the Convention in Rochester, recruitment and retention was at the forefront. It goes without saying that the need to refill our ranks is critical for our survival. Never miss an opportunity to talk to potential members and always have a membership application on hand. Also I would challenge all posts to hold recruitment events at the Post or County fairs, etc.

Programs are also vital to the VFW. They are truly necessary and a great way to recognize our fantastic students, teachers, firefighters and police of each community, just to mention a few.

I would like to utilize this format and encourage all 1st District posts to forward to me positive events and stories of interest and patriotic community service their posts do through the year. We need to make sure the public knows what we do for them and how we continue to serve our communities after our service to the country.

What day is Poppy Day. Answer, Every Day is Poppy Day.

Enjoy the summer while it lasts, the days are way to short here up north.

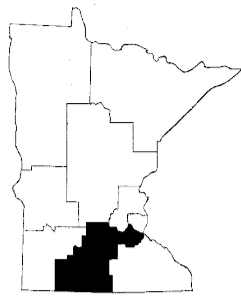


**Kristian Kohn, Auxiliary
President First District**

During the 2024-2025-year, MN District 1 Auxiliary will be raising funds to purchase gift cards. These cards are for gas, food, or just the money to get by. We all know that many of our veterans and their families suffer from financial struggles.

Veteran food insecurity is not a new issue in our country. 1 in 9 working-age veterans are food insecure. 24% of active-duty service members were food insecure in 2020. 1.2 million low-income veterans use SNAP (formerly known as food stamps). The question became how do we get these helping items into the hands of veterans and their families

DIST. 1 AUX. - Cont. on Page 12



**Maria Maldonado, Commander
Second District**

Hello from the Second District. Congratulations to our newly elected officers at all levels of our organization. I am grateful to our members that served and continue to serve our veterans and our communities every day. I am also humbled by the opportunity to work side by side with an incredibly talented, professional, and dedicated group of comrades.

I would like to congratulate all our posts for their great efforts recruiting and retaining members. This is a monumental task, especially for some of our smaller posts. Second District achieved 97% membership with twelve posts obtaining 100% or higher. I am very proud of this accomplishment and know that we will continue to work hard to strengthen our numbers.

During our July 13, 2024 Council of Administration, Commander Staehlin announced the posts that were selected as All American Posts. I am very proud to share that Second District has three All American Posts: Post 1210 – Hastings Top 25 in the nation, Post 5340 – Montgomery, and Post 6208 – Prior Lake. Congratulations to all.

One of my goals for this year is to improve communication within our District. Communication. Transparency is critical for the success of any organization. We

DIST. 2 VFW - Cont. on Page 12



**Becky Selleck, Auxiliary
President Second District**

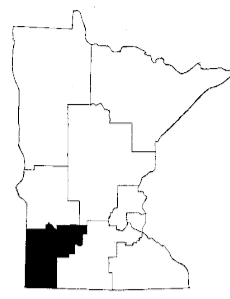
Greetings Second District Members.

As we embark on the new program year, I am honored to serve as District Auxiliary President. This past year has been marked by outstanding dedication and achievements, and I am confident that together, we will build on this strong foundation.

Our focus this year will be on membership retention and growth, ensuring that our programs continue to thrive.

I encourage all members to actively participate in our initiatives, including Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen competitions, and engage with local schools for the Americanism contest.

Let's work together to make this year a success, and I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming meetings and events.



**Merle Rabenberg, Commander
Third District**

Greetings from the 3rd District. I will keep this short and sweet. I am honored to have been elected to represent and guide the posts and members of my district.

Congratulations go out to all new Department Officers and my fellow district commanders.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the upcoming Fall Conference in Willmar.



**Diane Rabenberg, Auxiliary
President Third District**

Greetings from District 3! I am thrilled to be the new District 3 President. I joined Pacholl Moser VFW Auxiliary 2603 under my husband's eligibility. He served a year in Korea and also deployed during Southern Watch and Enduring Freedom.

Our auxiliaries have continued to volunteer in support of the Luverne Veterans Home and local celebrations. The Wilmont Post honored Flag Day by demonstrating the 13 folds of the flag before burning tattered and torn flags. After serving root beer floats, they gave away 10 bikes and a helmet.

We were excited to learn that Ella Knakmuhs, whose entry was sponsored by Helge-Smestad Auxiliary 5098 in Westbrook, won 1st place at the department level in the Getting Excited For The Red White and Blue youth activities contest!

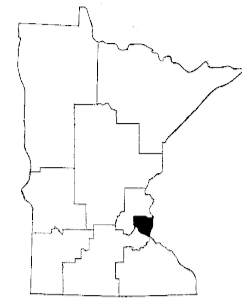
I am looking forward to the coming year. We will do our best to support our veterans, in Karen England's words, "Always in all ways".

Our next meeting will be in Wilmont on October 5th.



**Carol Kratz, Auxiliary
President Fourth District**

My newsletter was sent out giving the district and department meeting dates, along with contact information of our district officers and chairmen. We have our Proposed Guidelines meeting set to prepare for our future. Our District meeting is set for Sat August 24th at Mendota World War II VFW. My District Project is the Veterans Rest Camp on Big Marine Lake, where I serve on the Board of Directors. I am very excited to work with our new officers and chairmen and dream of having each auxiliary represented at our meetings.



**Sean Gustafson, Commander
Fourth District**

Greetings Fighting Fourth! Thank you for trusting me to help helm the best District in MN. Tremendous gratitude and appreciation for his years of hard work from all of us to outgoing District Commander Mike Lindvall. He has left us set up for continuing great success. Congratulations to Woodbury, St. Paul Post 5, and New Brighton for all exceeding their strength goals last year. It was a tough year, but you all shined. We have so many advantages here in the Capitol District, please take some extra time this year to plan and focus on inviting eligible area veterans to join our great organization and auxiliary.

This year should be an especially incredible year for us in that Fourth District's own Dave Staehlin is our new Department Commander and both he and President England have selected Believet Canine Service Partners out of Northfield to be their Projects. I'll be helping Commander Dave while White Bear's own Deb Courts-Brown will be helping President England with this endeavor. Please read more about it in this copy of the Oversea'r, at the Commanders Project dropdown link on the vfwmn.org website, or at www.believet.org.

Finally, I'm really looking forward to working with District President Carol Kratz, getting out and seeing so many of you at your post homes and meeting places, and helping all of us live up to our motto "no one does more for Vets than us!"



**Cindi Nelson, Auxiliary
President Fifth District**

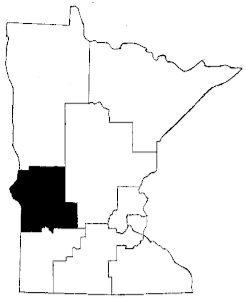
Greetings from District 5 Auxiliary.

As the newly elected President, I would like to start by thanking the members of the 5th District Auxiliary for electing me to this position and putting your trust in me.

I have been a member of the Fort Chippewa Post 936 in Alexandria for the past 16-17 years. It wasn't until the past 10 years that I became more active in the post auxiliary. I have held various auxiliary positions and 4 years ago was elected as the auxiliary president.

The District Auxiliary is in the planning stages of a group project with the District VFW. District Cmdr. Lee Christopherson and I have had several conversations and shared ideas. I am really excited to begin

DIST. 5 AUX. - Cont. on Page 9



**Lee Christopherson, Commander
Fifth District**

Greetings from the 5th!

First off, I would like to thank everyone for electing me as your district commander, its an honor to be the Commander of the 5th.

It is going to be a busy year with programs. Speaking of programs, let us talk about conferences. The Fall Conference will be held in the 5th District this year, September 20-22 in Willmar. The main emphasis will be "Programs." I personally challenge all the 13 post commanders in the 5th District to attend the Fall Conference. I would like to acknowledge a few great members in our district, from both the VFW and Auxiliary.

Comrades Rick Loxtercamp and Mike Kral for keeping Post 7902 up and running by performing building maintenance to cutting the grass. Command Earl Cline for his drive to keep Post 5039 still in operation after the great loss of his auxiliary. Lastly, the amazing auxiliary in Alexandria spearheaded by President Cindi Nelson. They have done great things from organizing benefits to running a hockey tournament.

I could go on and on about the great members in my district but truly I believe that the VFW has some great people and I am honored to be among them.

Our next District meeting is scheduled for September 29th at Starbuck VFW Post 4582 at 2 PM. I highly encourage the members of the 5th District to be at the meeting especially post commanders and any other members from other districts would like to attend, we will greet you with open arms.

In Closing, I am looking forward to seeing all of you at the various VFW functions, Stay Healthy.

DIST. 5 AUX. - Cont. from Page 8

working on this group project.

We were blessed to have the traveling Vietnam Wall in Alexandria on Father's Day weekend. If you were able to attend, it was a sight to see. The program "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans" was such a success. In it, they recognized 212 Veterans in a tear jerking program. It was a real honor to help out.

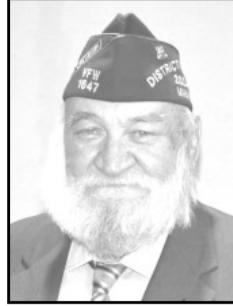
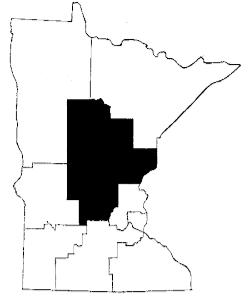
I became a member of the VFW Auxiliary because my father was a Vietnam Veteran.

I look forward to the coming year and the opportunity to meet as many of you as possible and work with your auxiliaries.

Our first meeting will be on September 29th in Starbuck at 2:00 pm. I hope to see many of you there.

Wishing you a safe and healthy summer!

See you all at the Fall Conference.



**Donald Lohse, Commander
Sixth District**

Comrades to all in the Sixth District.

I have been blessed with the leadership position of this great district, and believe there is a fantastic cadre of staff officers, and program chairs. With everyone's cooperation, I believe this district can do phenomenal things going forward. My hope, is to have the district recognized as All-American, and All-State. That will take dedication and work from every member of every post in the district.

A schedule of district meetings is as follows: Saturday, August 10, in Randall, Post 9073, lunch at 11:00, meeting at 1:00 PM; Saturday, October 12, in Jenkins, Post 3839, lunch at 11:00, meeting at 1:00 PM; Saturday, December 7, St. Cloud, Granite Post 428, lunch at 11:00, followed by VOD and Patriots Pen awards, meeting about 1:00 PM; February 8th will be in Sauk Rapids, Post 6992, lunch at 11:00, meeting about 1:00 PM. Our final meeting for the year, and District Convention, will be held in Browerville, Post 8391, at 9:00 followed by elections, joint installation and then lunch.



**Deb Wieshalla, Auxiliary
President Sixth District**

Greetings from the 6th District!

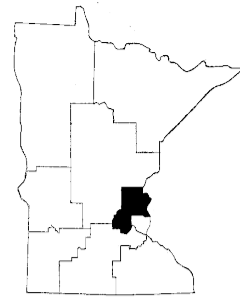
Here we are at the beginning of a new year VFW Year. All post auxiliaries have been busy supporting our veterans and their families. Area festivals and activities abound, and we have been front and center showing our communities what the VFW Auxiliary is all about.

I am proud to say District 6 Auxiliary members have put their faith and confidence in me again to elect me to be their President. We have a great group of line officers and chairman for our programs. We all work together as a team, and it shows!

Several auxiliary members will be traveling to Louisville, Kentucky for the National Convention. This is the first time I have had such an opportunity and am so excited. I am bringing with the Category 1 Minnesota entry for the Poppy Display. Of course it's from the 6th District! I am hopeful to see Minnesota bring home many awards. We have done amazing work this past year as we always do.

Our next District meeting will be on Saturday August 10 in Randall at the Post Home. Lunch will be at 11 am, followed by the meeting at 1 pm. Our Department Rep will be President Karen England.

Best wishes to all as we finish out our summer and move toward fall.



**Dennis Maddox, Commander
Seventh District**

Greetings from the 7th District.

Thank you for electing me to be your District Commander. It is an honor to lead and represent the Mighty 7th!

Congratulations to Posts 246, 494, 2735 and 5518 for reaching the National and Department goals of 102%. We had many posts win awards and certificates at the State Convention. I would also like to congratulate the All-State Commanders and Quartermasters, as well as all the post members that worked as a team to achieve these goals!

My primary focus for this year will be membership. We need our veterans to know that we are a team of veterans fighting for veterans. We ALL need to strive to increase membership to keep our organization strong, so veterans get all the benefits they earned and deserve. As always, please continue to work on converting your Annual members to Life Members and your Life Members to Legacy Life Members!

It's not too early to reach out to the public about our Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Programs and encourage participation. Our children are our future, and we should all strive for strong youth that have a love for our country.

Please make a solid effort to attend your District Meetings, Department Conferences and Department and District Conventions. You'll be surprised by the people you meet, how much fun you'll have, and all the things you'll learn, not to mention the camaraderie that comes with being around so many fellow members. This year the Officer Training Instruction (OTI) at Department Convention was the best one I've been to and I've been to several. Also, if you've never attended a National Convention, I highly recommend it. It is an amazing event that every member should experience.

My goal is to visit every post in the district. As many of the post commanders can attest, I'm not one to announce my visits, unless I'm coming to do a post inspection. I strive to meet and interact with district members and answer any questions they might have. I encourage the other District Officers to visit posts as well.

Our first district meeting will be a joint VFW and Auxiliary meeting held on Saturday, September 7 at Sgt. John Rice VFW Post 6316 (Blaine) at 10 am. Please make sure you have at least one representative from your Post attend!

I look forward to seeing all of my comrades at the Fall Conference in Willmar.

Say Safe out there.

DISTRICT MEETINGS

- First District**
Dec. 7 Cannon Falls #4452 @ 9:30 AM
 - Second District**
Sept. 28 Hutchinson #906 @ 1 PM
 - Third District**
Oct. 5 Wilmont #2603 @ 10 AM
 - Fourth District**
Aug. 24 Mendota #6690 @ 9 AM
 - Fifth District**
Sept. 29 Starbuck #4582 @ 2 PM
 - Sixth District**
Oct. 12 Jenkins #3839 @ 11 AM
 - Seventh District**
Sept. 7 Blaine #6316 @ 10 AM
 - Eighth District**
Oct. 5 Grand Rapids #1720 @ 9 AM
 - Ninth District**
Sept. 14 TRF #2793 @ 1 PM
-
- MOC**
Aug. 17 Brooklyn Pk #3915 @ 10 AM



**Peg Snoko, Auxiliary
President Seventh District**

Greetings from the 7th District Auxiliary!

As a proud member of the Fred Babcock Post 5555 Auxiliary, I would like to thank all my brothers and sisters of the 7th District Auxiliary for putting your trust in me for this next year. Membership will be a priority as without members we will not have an organization.

This year started with celebrating the 248th birthday of our great nation and it was wonderful to see so many parades and members out in the community with our veterans.

Our first District meeting is Saturday, September 7th at the Post 6316 in Blaine. We will again be having a joint start to our meeting. At this time, we will introduce all the program chairmen in the VFW and the Auxiliary.

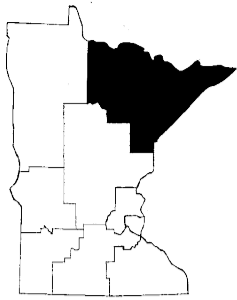
Let us all work together and help our Veterans shine brightly.

It will also be an exciting year as the VFW Auxiliary will celebrate it 100th year in January 2025.

TUORILA - Cont. from Page 1

He is a member of the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, Military Order of the Cootie, Korean War Veterans Association, 2nd Infantry Division Association, AMVETs, the Forty and Eight, and is an associate member of the American Ex-Prisoners of War Association.

James and his wife, Diane, reside in St. Cloud, Minnesota.



**Anthony Rechichi, Commander
Eighth District**

My Comrades,

I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to serve in the position of Commander of the 8th District and to represent the District on the Department Council of Administration.

I am know that I will be able to contribute to the success of the District 8, and I am focused on looking forward to learning more and helping to achieve the Department's goals. As a Senior Vice Commander, I understood the importance of working hard and meeting the goals of the Department and our District, and I am eager to take on this new challenge.

Thank you for extending this offer and for the faith you have placed in me. I look forward leading our district am fully committed to doing my best.



**Marlaina Hart, Auxiliary
President Eighth District**

Greetings from District 8

I thank the District for putting their faith in me as President once again! I am looking forward to another successful year.

I would like to thank all of those auxiliary members that stepped up to fill the officer and program chair positions in the district. All District meetings have been scheduled.

Memorial Day services were held across the district and our deceased veterans were honored and remembered.

Independence Day celebrations were joyous occasions around the whole area with our Post Honor and Color Guard units leading many of the parades. Exciting times for the children and adults alike. And of course all the SPECTACULAR displays of fireworks lighting up the skies!

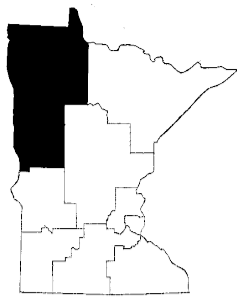
The district and posts are looking forward to working with the students and schools on the VOD and Patriot's Pen Programs this year. My hope is to have many entries for our contests from each school.

Have a great year everyone!



**Shirley Quist, Auxiliary
President Ninth District**

The 2024-2025 year is off to a fast start and I am looking forward to working with 9th District Commander, Kelly Booge, and each of our auxiliaries in the Mighty 9th District. What an honor to



**Kelly Booge, Commander
Ninth District**

Hello Comrades,

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of my Ninth District comrades for putting your trust in me as your leader. It is an honor to serve as your Commander and I will work hard to maintain your trust in me.

The first part of July we had the dedication for the new Veterans Home in Bemidji. After years of hard work by a lot of people, we now have veterans living in the home. A huge "Thank You" goes out to anyone that had a part – no matter how small – in making this dream a reality. As we head into the next phase of this project we will work together with the staff and leadership of the home to figure out how things will work out best for the veterans living there.

As we start a new year we need to make membership a top priority along with serving our veterans. Continue to work hard and be diligent in talking to potential new VFW members. Keep up the good work.

This year's goal is 100% at Department, and 102% at National.

Keep capturing your Community Service and upload that information to the dashboard. If you have problems with the dashboard, please contact our Adjutant Josh Kojetin. Be proud of how you help our vets and share that information with other posts and districts.

For all posts that have an active auxiliary, I encourage you to have the post and auxiliary work closely together in all possible ways. Please be sure you are working as a team and tapping into the great resource of an active auxiliary. Working as a team will make you stronger, and will also help you cover more options for working with our vets.

Keep our mission at the forefront and we will be successful.

represent our District! District Post and Auxiliary Officers have come together to march in the Fergus Falls Veterans Home Stars & Stripes Parade and to attend the dedication of the beautiful Bemidji Veterans Home. You just must visit it.

The district organizational meeting will be held in August to discuss plans for the year and provide Trustee/Audit Training. The 9th District covers a large area, so we will meet in 2 different locations to allow more member participation.

With summer winding down and school ready to begin, our auxiliaries are out in the community, promoting the VFW Programs and encouraging membership at every opportunity.

The Ninth District Auxiliary is here to Serve those who Served in All Ways.

COMMANDER - Cont. from Page 1

Guard veteran. I served aboard a forward-deployed guided missile destroyer as a Radioman 2nd Class (Navy PO2/E-5), in the Nebraska Air National Guard as the HF Radio Supervisor (USAF TSgt/E-6) during college, and aboard a Navy fast combat support ship in various positions as a Navy Supply Corps Officer (Navy LT/O-3E).

My eligibility for membership is receipt of the Navy Expeditionary Service Medal (Iranian, Yemen and Indian Ocean Operation) and the Southwest Asia Service Medal with two campaign devices (Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm).

I have served as an All-State and All-American Post Quartermaster, as a Post Commander, and twice as District Commander including a year as an All-American District Commander. I have also served for many years as the State Parliamentarian and teach

parliamentary procedure.

Thank you for your membership in the VFW, VFW Auxiliary, or both. Your membership matters! Your annual membership dues or proceeds from the investment of your life membership payment help fund our National, Department, and Post operations.

Your membership also helps fund our Veterans Claims Office as the annual grant that we receive from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is partially based on our membership numbers.

Your membership is also critical when we advocate for veterans at the Minnesota Legislature and with Congress. Being able to share that we represent many of their constituents and voters gives our advocacy work greater impact.

For those members who attend monthly membership meetings; serve on committees or as officers; and those who volunteer at our Posts, I offer special thanks.



Coon Rapids Post 9625 led off the 2024 July 4th Parade with their Honor Guard and the Post Float containing Commander Nathan Morgan, Auxiliary President Yvonne Sadin and others. The float was towed by a vintage Army, M35 Series, 2-1/2 ton Cargo Truck



On Armed Forces Day, May 18, Neville-Lien Post 1287, Winona, veterans (l to r) Mike Rompa, Le Roy Kohner, Mel Bailey, Gerard Lampo and Jerry Obieglo were each presented locally-made quilts by volunteer members of the local chapter of The Quilts of Valor Foundation. The quilts are to given to service members and veterans who have been touched by war.



The Lake City Waterski Days Parade featured the Bernard Flesche Post 8729 Honor Guard and float with honored guests Dept. Cmdr David Staehlin and Dept. Pres. Karen Englund

State Contest Winners

NATIONAL AWARDS

Employer of the Year
Kevin Vierkant
Rock on Enterprises, Inc.
Nominated by: Granite Post 428
St. Cloud

VFW Member of the Year
David B. Meyer
Mahlum Hanson Post 1647
Nominated by: Mahlum Hanson Post 1647
Brainerd

Community Service Contest

CATEGORY I (250 and Less)

First Place
Charles D. Center Post 3289
and Auxiliary, New York Mills

Second Place
Eugene H. Truax Post 4393
and Auxiliary, Northfield

Third Place
Lyle Russell Post 1210
and Auxiliary, Hastings

CATEGORY II (251 - 500)

First Place
Hugo Matejcek Post 3723
and Auxiliary, Owatonna

Second Place
Bernard Flesche Post 8729
and Auxiliary, Lake City

Third Place
Keep-Zimmer Post 1782
and Auxiliary, White Bear Lake

CATEGORY III (Over - 501)

First Place
Coon Rapids Post 9625
and Auxiliary, Coon Rapids

MINNESOTA'S MOST OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE POST

Hugo Matejcek Post 3723
and Auxiliary, Owatonna

BEST SOCIAL MEDIA SITE

First Place
Mahlum Hanson Post 1647
and Auxiliary Brainerd
Social Media Managers: Mark Persons
& Sue Sterling

Second Place
Lyle Russell Post 1210
and Auxiliary, Hastings
Social Media Manager: Lou Plevell

NATIONAL SAFETY AWARDS



Firefighter of the Year
Chris Minor
Browerville Fire Department
Sponsored by: Browerville Post 8391
Browerville

Emergency Medical Technician of the Year
Brian Sanoski
EMT/Firefighter
Randall Fire Rescue
Sponsored by: Curtis-Olson Post 9073
Randall

Law Enforcement of the Year
Tabitha Wood
Investigator
City of Columbia Heights Police Dept.
Sponsored by: Columbia Heights Post 230
Columbia Heights



Dispatcher of the Year
Shannon Housey
911 Dispatcher
Stearns County Dispatch
Sponsored by: Granite Post 428
St. Cloud



Bus Driver of the Year
Danny Fischer
Bus Driver
Dr. S.G. Knight Elementary School
Sponsored by: Curtis-Olson Post 9073
Randall



JROTC Cadet of the Year
Nolan Rognerud
MCJROTC
Sponsored by: Roseville Post 7555



Scout of the Year
Riley Symicek
Eagle Scout
Sponsored by: Cottage Grove Post 8752

CHAPLAIN OF THE YEAR

Eusebia Rios
Brainerd Post 1647, Brainerd
Presented by: Scott Hansen, Dept. Chaplain

VETERANS & MILITARY SUPPORT

Four posts that donated more than \$100

Charles McLaughlin Post 906	
Hutchinson	\$150
Keep-Zimmer Post 1782	
White Bear Lake	\$200
Johnson-Messner-Roche Post 1221	
Hibbing	\$200
Woodbury Post 9024	
Woodbury	\$300

TOP RECRUITER AWARD

Jim Richter
Charles R. Knaeble Post 494
Crystal

MOST OUTSTANDING POST SAFETY AWARD

Lyle Russell Post 1210 and Aux.
Hastings

OUTSTANDING POST YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

CATEGORY I (less than 101 members)

First Place
Eugene H. Truax Post 4393
and Auxiliary, Northfield

CATEGORY II (101 to 300 members)

First Place
Olaf B. Damm Post 1216
and Auxiliary, Austin

CATEGORY III (over 300 members)

First Place
Rapids Post 6992
and Auxiliary, Austin

POST PUBLICATIONS CONTEST

CATEGORY I (250 and Less)

First Place
Charles Leuthard Post 5039
and Auxiliary, Morris
Editor: Theodore (Ted) Storck

Second Place
Neville-Lien Post 1287
and Auxiliary, Winona
Editor: Mel Bailey

Third Place
George H. Elliott Post 7902
and Auxiliary, Osakis
Editor: Steve & Lori Stixrud

CATEGORY II (251 & greater)

First Place
Sgt. John Rice Post 6316
and Auxiliary, Blaine
Editor: Mary Lou Michels

Second Place
Charles R. Knaeble Post 494
and Auxiliary, Crystal
Editor: Lesley Kurke

BEST FEATURE STORY

First Place
Curtis-Olson Post 9073
Randall
Published in the Morrison County Record
September 24, 2023

Second Place
Mahlum Hanson Post 1647
and Auxiliary Brainerd
Published in the Brainerd Dispatch
February, 2023

All-State Commanders

Captain of the All-State Commanders: Paul Ollmann, Post 1210



Back row (l to r): Rodney Stigers, Post 3979; Jason Oxley, Post 6992;
David C. David, Post 4258; Troy Stegora, Post 8731.
Front row (l to r): Tim Kent, Post 2735; Tracy Closson, Post 4393; Rick Godfrey, Post 494;
Ed Keogh, Post 5430; Melissa Medbery, Post 9073; Paul Lindahl, Post 9024.

Missing: David Good, Post 806; Paul Ollmann, Post 1210; Jerry Sanborn, Post 1221;
James Mathias, Post 4086; David Boily, Post 5518; Maynard LaFleur, Post 5905;
Scott Kiger, Post 6208.

All-State Quartermasters



Back row (l to r): Jim Richter, Post 494; Bryan Anderson, Post 6992;
Katherine Oberg, Post 806.
Front row (l to r): Ron Widell, Post 8731; Dave Thompson, Post 6208;
Kevin Phelps, Post 4393; Jim Murtaugh, Post 1210.

Missing: Russell Bentley, Post 1221; Larry Huhn, Post 2735; Cory Kotek, Post 5340;
Gary Johnson, Post 6318; Darrin Ewing, Post 9024; Graham Gustafson, Post 9073.

Commander's/President's Project

By Sean Gustafson, Project Coordinator

Both Department Commander Dave Staehlin and Auxiliary President Karen Englund have selected Believet for their Commander's/President's Project.

Believet™ provides highly trained service dogs, free of charge, to disabled veterans, helping them to lead more productive, independent lives. Trained service dogs can provide an essential source of security, affection, and connection for our veterans.

The dogs are specially-trained to perform mobility and psychiatric tasks. They can wake a veteran from a nightmare, ease their anxiety in a crowded public place, and provide comfort through companionship and physical contact. The dogs also help keep veterans on a schedule because they need care and attention on a regular basis.

A service dog provides a sense of security, greater independence, non-judgmental acceptance, affection, physical assistance, and peace of mind.



Service Dogs are expensive, and time-consuming, to train. Around \$30,000 per dog, with mostly volunteers training, fostering, and providing veterinary care for the 12-18 months it takes to turn rescue dogs from shelters and donated puppies into accredited Service Dogs.

Donations can be made by check to MN VFW Charitable Association, earmarked "Commander's/President's Project."

Consider hosting an event of any kind in the coming year to help this amazing non-profit whose mission is to help our fellow veterans.

NAT'L CONV - Cont. from Page 1

his vision for the year, which he deems "Operation All In," calling on all levels of the organization to embrace courage and the warrior spirit that sets the VFW apart as the oldest and largest combat veterans organization.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts are some of the very few places where heroes gather, and warriors meet," said Lipphardt. "Too many people in this nation have forgotten what it is to be a warrior. Heroes are what others think of us. Warriors are who we are."

Throughout Lipphardt's speech, he reflected on those he served with in the Army, veterans within his family, and how they influenced his life. A solemn moment came when he spoke the names of the ones he lost during the Vietnam War.

Lipphardt's remarks harkened back to core tenants of the VFW, as well as its stated vision – ensure that veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country.

"I have only been a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for 20 years, but I have seen too many members who have forgotten our roots," said Lipphardt. "Whatever the branch, whatever the military specialty, or whenever the conflict, let us never forget those who no

longer have a voice."

Lipphardt joined the VFW in 2002 when he became a charter member of VFW Post 12002 in North Fulton, Georgia. He later transferred his Gold Legacy Life membership to his current post VFW Post 2667 in Newnan, Georgia. He has served in elected and appointed positions at the Post, District and Department levels, culminating with his election as the VFW Department of Georgia commander from 2014 to 2015. On the national level, he has served on the Legislative Committee, the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, and the Council of Administration.

Much of Lipphardt's remarks after being installed as commander-in-chief emphasized a commitment to values and valuing service to the nation. He also spoke about the importance of integrity within the organization.

"If your word is not to be trusted, everything and anything you do is unreliable. You can't be called on nor can you be counted on," said Lipphardt. "There is no place in the Veterans of Foreign Wars for these individuals."

"My ask is for you to embrace the vision of courage," said Lipphardt. "Rekindle the warrior's fire in your belly. Put that vision into action. I am proud to lead you, as together, we seek the courage to be the best we can be in all things and at all times."

"Believe in what you do -
Do what you believe in."

DIST 1 AUX. - Cont. from Page 8

who need it the most? How do we know who may need it "right now"? The answer... our local Veteran Service Officers (VSO). The goal for this year is to be able to provide gift cards to every County's VSO in the District. Our VSOs see the right now need, they should be given a right now tool to help.

Providing our VSOs another tool to support our veterans and their families is part of the mission of the VFW Auxiliary. District 1 is, has always been, and will always be proud to do the work so that our nation's heroes and their families can live the lives they deserve.

DIST 2 VFW - Cont. from Page 8

cannot work in a vacuum and "knowledge is power", only when shared with all the members. Our district staff is ready to help and support all our posts with any challenges. Please don't hesitate to contact me or any other district staff member, if we don't have the answer we will find it for you.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the Department Fall Conference, 20-22 September 2024 in Willmar, MN. Our first District Meeting will be a joint VFW and Auxiliary meeting and will be held on September 28, 2024 at Hutchinson VFW Post 906.

Small Post Makes a Big Difference

Cotton – Meadowlands Post 3044 serves an area spanning nearly 800 square miles. In addition to the members hailing from several small communities and townships across the region, there are members who have enduring familial connections with Post 3044 and regularly come from as far away as Ely just to participate in post events and activities.

Despite these challenges Post 3044 has for many years now provided Memorial Day remembrance services at 11 different rural cemeteries. This nearly 90-mile route is covered every Memorial Day.

While conducting these services, it became apparent that many of these small communities could benefit from a means of recognizing the veterans interred there. John Olstad, Post Adjutant, suggested that the post provide each of the cemeteries with not only a map and roster, but the means to display them. The post does not own a post home/canteen but rents space from the Cotton Community Center for most of their meetings and events. This effort then would have to be funded out of the posts limited coffers.



Gretchen Larsen, Post QM and District 8 Adjutant suggested asking the MN VFW Charitable Association for some help. Post 3044 received a \$2200 grant with the remaining funds coming from post funds to provide each cemetery with a weatherproof enclosure. John Olstad assembled an information packet to accompany each display, which included a roster of buried veterans, a cemetery grave map, information on flag display, grave marker ordering, and contact information for the Post as well as the County Veterans Service Office.

Now, all who visit the cemeteries know where our heroes lie.

Cmdr. David & Pres. Karen in Forest Lake Parade



(l to r) Post 4210 Cmdr. Bill Prinsen; VFW Cmdr. David Staehlin, VFW Aux. Pres. Karen Englund; Dist. 7 Aux Pres. Peg Snokke; Post Auxiliary President Lisa Woods; 7th Dist. Cmdr. Dennis Maddox

Veterans / Youth Activities

Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen

Comrades and Auxiliary members, the themes have been announced. Now is the time to start two of the VFW's most important programs, Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen. This year every post needs to visit with the your local schools and their teachers and students to let them know that both programs are alive and well. Inform them that we want their thoughts to be captured for this year's themes on a recording and on paper.

The Voice of Democracy topic is: "Is America Today our Forefathers Vision?". The Patriot's Pen topic is: "My Voice in America's Democracy".

Please do not hesitate to contact parents of Home School students as well. They have shown to be more than worthy entrants in these two premier programs.

The Rules and Eligibility as well as the Entry Forms for both Programs can be found on the VFW MN website at www.vfwmn.org.

Voice of Democracy entries are required to be submitted on flashdrives or on electronic media attachments.



2024 - 2025 Voice of Democracy Topic

**"Is America Today
our Forefathers Vision?"**

2024 - 2025 Patriot's Pen Topic

"My Voice in America's Democracy"

Entries are Due at Local VFW Posts by October 31st, 2024



FALL CONTESTS

SCHOLARSHIPS COMMUNITY



Senior High Scholarship
(Grades 9-12)

Voice of Democracy Audio Essay Competition

ENTER: Students write & record a 3-5 minute essay addressing this year's theme. (See Application for Details - VFW General Order or at www.vfwmn.org under the Programs drop-down)

AWARDS: \$30,000 National Winner & Free Trip to Washington D.C.; \$\$ and MPLS Hotel stay for District Winner; \$\$ for Local Winner


DEADLINE: Entries due to local VFW Post by October 31 each year

Middle School Scholarship
(Grades 6-8)

Patriot's Pen Essay Competition

ENTER: Students write a 300-400 word typed essay addressing this year's theme. (See Application for Details - VFW General Order or at www.vfwmn.org under the Programs drop-down)

DEADLINE: Entries are due to the local VFW Post no later than October 31 of each year.



Citizenship Education Teacher Award
(See Your VFW Post or VFW General Orders for Details)

This award contest recognizes three exceptional teachers for their outstanding commitment to teaching Americanism and patriotism to their students. Each year, a classroom elementary, junior high and high school teacher whose curriculum focuses on citizenship education topics.

(See Nomination Form for Details - VFW General Orders or www.vfwmn.org under the Programs drop-down)

AWARDS: In addition to local, District & State Awards, National Winners receive:

- A \$1,000 award for professional development expenses.
- A \$1,000 award for his/her school.
- Two award plaques: one for the teacher, the other for his/her school.
- An all-expenses-paid trip to attend a VFW national conference to receive their award.

DEADLINE: Entries are due to the local VFW Post no later than October 31 of each year.

VETERANS UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit www.vfwmn.org for Updates

Archery
2025
Open for Bids

Bean Bag
2025
Open for Bids

Bowling
2024
Hosted by South St. Paul #245
2025 & 2026
Open for Bids

Cribbage
2025
Open for Bids

Fishing
2025 & 2026
Open for Bids

Golf
2025
Coon Rapids #9625

Horseshoes
2025
Open for Bids

Pistol
2025
Open for Bids

Trap Shooting
2025
Open for Bids

YOUTH UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit www.vfwmn.org for Updates

Baseball
August 2025 & 2026
Open for Bids

Hockey
Girl's March 2025 & 2026
Open for Bids

Boy's March 2025 & 2026
Open for Bids

2024 VFW State Baseball Tournament

The 2024 State VFW Baseball Tournament was scheduled to start on Thursday, August 1. Rain in the St. Cloud area forced a one day delay. That did not dampen the teams' enthusiasm.

When the 10 teams took the fields on Friday, they represented over 70 different teams that played VFW baseball this year.

The last minute schedule weather changes resulted in some of the best baseball that had been played in years.

Congratulations to each team that participated in this years' district and state tournaments.

Thank you also goes out to each post that sponsored a team in this tournament.

Here are the final standings and sponsoring posts:

1st	Elk River	Post 5518
2nd	Marshall	Post 742
3rd	Rock Ridge	Post 1172
4th	Willmar	Post 1639

Champlin Park	Post 3915
Little Falls	Post 1112
Northfield	Post 4393
Rochester	Post 1215
Spring Lake Pk	Post 6587
St. Cloud East	Post 4847

Special thanks go to Post 4847 and the tournament officials who hustled to reschedule the rain delays and made this tournament a great success.



1st Place: Elk River sponsored by Post 5518

Civil War Soldier Finally Receives Headstone

Sgt. John Wesley Harper has lain in an unmarked grave at Crystal Lake Cemetery in Minneapolis since his interment on May 6, 1920.

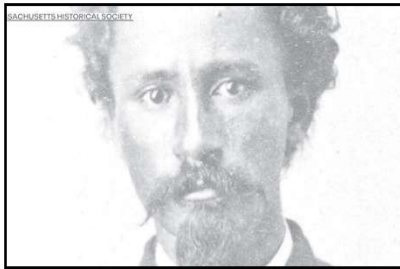
He was born April 26, 1839 in Wheeling, West Virginia.

On May 5, 1863 at the age of 23, Harper joined K Company, 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. Massachusetts was the first state to form a Black voluntary infantry unit. Harper was the company bugler.

The 54th is the subject of the movie *Glory* (1989) starring Morgan Freeman. It immortalized the unit and their attack on Fort Wagner, South Carolina on July 18, 1863.

Harper was wounded during this battle and carried the bullet to his grave.

He was mustered out after the



Civil War. Harper reinlisted and continued to serve as a member of the 25th US Infantry (Buffalo Soldiers) garrisoned at Ft. Snelling for nearly thirty years. He retired from there as an ordinance sergeant.

In early 1904, the *Minneapolis Journal* contained interviews with Twin Cities residents who were survivors of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry. At that time, Harper stated

CIVIL WAR - Cont. on Page 14

Minnesota VFW Riders

By Chad Engen



Hello to my fellow Comrades and Auxiliary,

My name is Chad Engen (Warrior) and have been appointed to chair the MN VFW Riders. I also serve as the President of the Monticello Riders.

The VFW Riders from Monticello, MN, USS Dorchester 8731, has had the honor of participating in two events in the recent weeks that just have to be talked about.

To start with, we were invited by the Post Commander of Pine City, MN Post 4258, to escort his daughter to Gillette Children's Hospital in St. Paul, MN for a life saving surgery to correct her scoliosis. The VFW Riders immediately contacted motorcycle riders from various Legion Riders Groups, CVMA Riders, along with first responders from multiple cities for this escort. No words can be conveyed from the family for what our VFW Riders accomplished for this ride battling darkness and very heavy rain. This is the first reason I am so proud to be a part of this organization.

Secondly, our Monticello VFW

Riders were contacted by a family that have a 12-year-old child that has been battling cancer and was removed from the Make a Wish Foundation list as they thought it was beaten. Cancer came back, and now what do they do? The family contacted us about possibly helping get the child a dream motorcycle, so we jumped into action. After several phone calls and text messages, we had raised the money the family could never raise to take care of this wish. Finally, on July 6, 2024, we were able to take this child to Moon Motorsports in Monticello, MN where the owner Kyle helped us outfit him for all the riding gear needed to ride without worries from the parents.

My thanks go out to all that have helped and any that want to help in the future with what we are doing for the veterans and our communities. Please do not hesitate if you would like to help or be involved in any way. You can call or text me at 701-566-2989 or email at chadengen@yahoo.com



Cootie Korner

By Todd "Tiny" Roberts
Commander of the Grand of MN



To my fellow Comrades and Auxiliary,

I would like to thank you for having the faith in me to be elected as your Most Lousy Grand Seam Squirrel. It has been a very busy schedule so far and now we are preparing for the National and Supreme Conventions.

The year started out with being able to attend the Memorial Day Services at Camp Ripley Cemetery and Ft. Snelling Cemetery. Both were a huge honor for me. Then off to the dedication of the new Montevideo Veterans Home on May 31st, followed by the 30-year anniversary at the Luverne Veterans Home on June 7th. On June 30th, my wife and I were in attendance of the captain's dinner at the Knife River Marine. The boat captains were recognized by the Silver Bay Veterans Home Staff before escorting veterans out on Lake Superior fishing trip on July 1st. Also, there have been dedication Ceremonies for Bemidji and Preston Veterans Homes.

I would also like to congratulate all our new Department Officers. I look forward to this year working with Commander Dave Staehlin.

Cooties, keep working our fertile hunting grounds as membership should never stop. Keep the hospital reports coming, and remember always:

"Keep em smiling in beds of white".



Lake Superior Cootie fishing trip



Jenkins Post 3839 celebrated its 50th anniversary by welcoming the traveling Tomb of the Unknown at the event. Post Commander Dan Erickson and District 6 Commander Don Lohse were on hand to preside over the ceremony. The all-day event included a dunk tank, bounce house and live music.



Past Department Commander Dan Meyer is shown with the 2024 Military Family Car Donation recipient Amanda Kasten and her daughter Scarlett as they admire the "new" 2020 Chevrolet Equinox.

Together with AAA-The Auto Club Group and vendor partners, LaMettry's Collision collaborates to repair and donate a vehicle each year to a military member and/or military family in need.

Timely Tidbits

From Farmer to Seabee to Salesman to VFW Vet

by Ken Schroeffer, editor



Born July 29, 1926, Kenneth W. Langmade would eventually be the second of eleven children. When the Great Depression started in 1929, his parents moved the family from Minneapolis to a couple of rented farms first in St. Francis and then Crown, MN over the next few years. Finally, as the family grew larger, like farm families always did, they settled down in the Elk River area.

It was in 1944 during his senior year that a navy recruiter came to visit the Elk River High School. Ken decided that he needed to go defend his country. The day after graduation, he was shipped off for basic training at Farragut Naval Training Station in northern Idaho. He was one of nearly 300,000 young seamen trained there over a four-year period.

Ken decided that he wanted to be a Seabee. So, he was sent to San Francisco where he became a heavy equipment mechanic and operator and then on to Pearl Harbor to help rebuild the naval base buildings after the Japanese attack.

After stops at Midway and Wake Islands Ken arrived on Guam where he spent 18 months rebuilding the airstrips. The Seabees were pushing back the jungle as they widened the airstrip to handle the larger land based bombers. Marine units were assigned to protect them from snipers who hid in the trees. Ken supervised and became friendly with several Japanese POWs who worked as laborers. One of his memorable souvenirs is a hand-painted handkerchief given to him by one of the POWs.

Ken recalled one particular occasion when nature called and he had to get off the dozer. As he approached the edge of the jungle, he smelt an odd odor. A marine squad was sent to investigate and found a hut with 3 Japanese soldiers and 3 Philippine women 100 yards into the jungle.

While on Guam, Ken was selected along with other Seabees was for specialized amphibious assault training. They were to accompany Marine units as they prepared for a land invasion of mainland Japan. They were waiting offshore when the atomic bombs were dropped.

March, 1946, Ken was discharged from the Navy on Okinawa and sent home to the family farm near Elk River.

He then bought a small farm near Crown, MN. After several years, he gave the farm to his parents, moved to Minneapolis and then off to Chicago where he earned a degree in electrical engineering thanks to the GI Bill. With the help of additional training in TV repair, he opened a small TV repair shop in Minneapolis and married Janette. The shop burnt down when a fire in an adjoining building spread to his shop.

After the fire, Ken tried to get financial help from his parts supplier. Instead, he was offered a job as a parts salesman. He parlayed that into a lifetime career ending as the top regional salesman in the MN, Western WI and Northern Iowa area for GE and Sylvania electronic parts. He retired in 1971.

The family (2 boys and 2 girls) lived in Blaine for 50 years. Ken found time to join Kraus-Hartig VFW Post 6587 in Spring Lake Park as a life member. He served as the post quartermaster and both district and department inspector for many years.

Ken and Janette remained very active in post and auxiliary functions until they moved to East Bethel in 2010.

They currently reside together in the Arbor Oaks Senior Living facility.

★★ 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.

Nat'l POW/MIA Recognition Day 9/20/24



The 11th Annual POW/MIA Recognition Day will be held at 5:30pm, Friday, September 20, 2024 at 7200 Greenfield Road, Greenfield, MN.

All Post Ritual Squads/Color Guards are welcome to participate. Staging starts at 5:00pm. Posting of the colors and POW/MIA flags will be led by Hamel American Legion Post 394 and Hamel VFW Post 5903.

Dignitaries will remind those present to remember the sacrifices of those who were Prisoners Of War (POW) as well as those who are Missing In Action (MIA) and their families.

Every military installation flies the National League of Families' POW/MIA flag in remembrance of the 83,000 Americans who remain missing.

CIVIL WAR - Cont. from Page 13

that even though he was born in freedom, the idea of an all-black regiment really interested him.

Harper raised a family of 16 children and spent his remaining years in Minneapolis until his death on May 2, 1920.

It was while working on creating a database for the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War that MN VFW member Gary Carlberg met Harry Davis Jr. great-great-grandson of John W. Harper.

Carlberg informed Davis of a project called Operation Headstone



Harry Davis Jr. (lower left), actors Bryce Stenzel (Abraham Lincoln), Gary Carlberg (U.S. Army Colonel) and descendants of Sgt. John W. Harper.

whereby a proper military headstone would be placed on Harper's grave site to honor his years of service to his country.

On June 23, 2024 many of Harper's descendents gathered along with other dignitaries including MN VFW Cmdr. David Staehlin, the Honor Guard from Palmer Lake VFW Post 3915, 1st Minnesota Infantry and many others to dedicate a proper military headstone.

After 104 years in an unmarked grave, Sgt. John W. Harper would receive the honor that he so long ago deserved.

Bruce Olson, a former Marine, carries the Certified Military Advisor designation, providing dedicated support for both military and non-military members and their families.

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Notice to All MN VFW Members

If you enjoy having access to all things VFW especially the National VFW magazine, then you MUST have a current email address on file. This can be your own email address or that of a trusted family member. For the years 2024 and 2025, the VFW Magazine will be printed and mailed for the months of January, April, August and October. The remaining months will only be available digitally. Notices/reminders will be sent out from the VFW by email informing you when digital editions are available. Starting

in 2026, the VFW Magazine will be 100% digital editions. If you are a member of a VFW post, your post quartermaster can go to www.vfw.org, log in, go to OMS and add or update your email address. If you are an At-Large member of the MN VFW, contact State Quartermaster Barry Henriksen at quartermaster@vfwmn.us or by phone at 651-291-1757. If you have any questions regarding this article, they may be directed to MN VFW Staff at 651-291-1757.



7TH ANNUAL SUMMERFEST SATURDAY AUGUST 17TH, 2024

The 7th Annual VFW Riders Summerfest will be hosted by Monticello VFW Post 8731 at 713 S. Cedar St., Monticello, MN. Registration open from 9:30am until 10:50am. Riders depart at noon and return at 4:00pm. A meal will be provided upon return. Pre-registration available at www.tinyurl.com/vfw8731SF

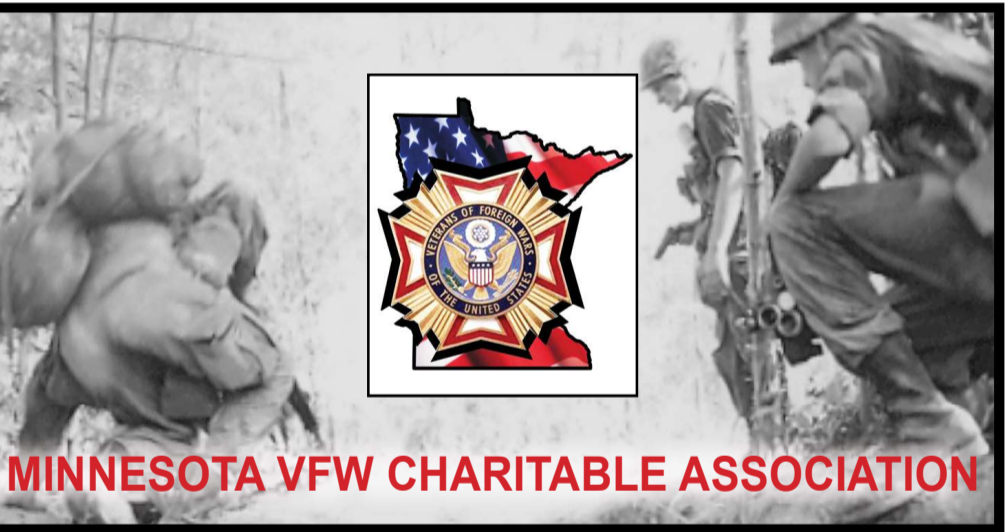
The event is open to the public after the ride. Entertainment includes: Silent Auction, Farmers Daughters Acoustic Band, Fender Bender and food and games. Proceeds to be donated to the Magnus Veterans Foundation and the Cooties Commander Project.

AD rates for the Oversea'r

The Gopher Oversea'r is the only way to reach 100% of this Departments membership. It is the official newspaper of the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars. We publish our paper three times a year to nearly thirty thousand Veterans in Minnesota. Our paper is four columns wide and fifteen inches deep/tall. Please see rate chart below:

	Column Width	Column Depth/Height in Inches				
		one	two	three	four	five
1 column	2 1/4 "	\$40	\$80	\$120	\$160	\$200
2 column	4 3/4 "	\$80	\$160	\$240	\$320	\$400
3 column	7 1/2 "	\$120	\$240	\$360	\$480	\$600
4 column	10"	\$160	\$320	\$480	\$640	\$800

How To Provide Us With Your Ad
 The Gopher Oversea'r is published electronically on our computers in-house. Our editor imports your electronic file directly into the newspaper. We prefer you to send all ads in TIFF or PDF format. All necessary font and graphic files relating to the ad must be included with your file. Image resolution needs to be no less than 300 dots per inch (dpi). PDF files, please embed complete fonts (not subsets) and graphics. Please do not enable any password protection or security block when creating a PDF. Convert all RGB or CMYK color to a Grayscale format unless otherwise agreed on. All ads must be "Camera Ready". If they are not you will be charged an additional forty dollars. **Before you send us any money be sure to talk to the Editor and make sure space is available and your Ad meets the requirements above**
 The Deadlines for Ads in this years Papers are:
 July 15, 2024* November 15, 2024* March 15, 2025*
 *All dates are subject to change



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

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

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

Name: _____

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

_____ VFW Outdoor Fund _____ Veterans Service _____ VFW Programs

The MNVFW Charitable Association Raffle Calendar is Now Available



This Calendar features photos of various National Monuments and Memorials Honoring the different branches of our Military. They sell for only \$20 each and your Post or Auxiliary will receive \$5 back for each Calendar sold...

Order your Calendars now- Email: mnvfwcharitable@gmail.com or Call 651-291-1757

To purchase a copy for yourself, contact your nearest VFW Post

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. The members of the VFW 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 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 and 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.

* Designate your Donation to a Charitable Trust in the name of the MN VFW Charitable Association.
 * Establish a Charitable Gift Annuity to the MN VFW Charitable Association.
 * Simply make a donation to the MN VFW Charitable Association.
 * Donate to the VFW Outdoor Fund.
 * Donate through the MN VFW Charitable Association Annual Raffle Calendar.

We certainly Appreciate the Consideration of the MN VFW Charitable Association in your Gift Giving Plans. Your Donation will ensure the future of the Programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. For more information, please contact the Treasurer of the MN VFW Charitable Association at 651-291-1757 or email us at mnvfwcharitable@gmail.com. Letters and Donations can be sent to: MN VFW Charitable Association, Rice Street Station, PO Box 17146, St. Paul, MN 55117