

GOPHER OVERSEAS

Volume 80, NO. 1

Official Publication of the Veterans of Foreign Wars - Department of Minnesota Celebrating 104 Years 1921-2025

February 2026 - May 2026

WWII Vet Finally Comes Home



Captain Willibald "Bill" Charles Bianchi will be honored and remembered for a life of extraordinary courage, service, and quiet humility.

This Congressional Medal of Honor recipient will be celebrated during a visitation at the New Ulm National Guard - Readiness Center in New Ulm on Saturday, May 2, 2026 from 10:00 to 11:45 a.m. At 12:00p.m., a graveside service and full military honors will take place in the Soldiers Rest Section of the New Ulm City Cemetery. A reception will follow back at the Readiness Center.

Captain Willibald "Bill" Charles Bianchi was born on March 12, 1915, in New Ulm, Minnesota, the son of Joseph and Caroline "Carrie" (Eibner) Bianchi. He was the second child and only son in the family, growing up with his sisters Josephine, Magdalene, Jermayn, and Mary Louise.

Bill helped his father with the chores on a 73-acre chicken/turkey farm just south of New Ulm. His father was killed in a farm accident while he was in high school. As a result, he left school to help at home. While attending the University of MN Farm School, he earned his high school degree.

In 1940, Bill graduated from the

BIANCHI - Cont. on Page 5

State Convention June 18-21, 2026

By Cheryl Burton, Department Office Manager

Our VFW State Convention is about wrapping up business, celebrating our accomplishments and planning for the 2026-27 year. This year, our Convention will return to the Crowne Plaza in Plymouth, MN. Upon arrival you can take advantage of a variety of restaurants near the hotel.

THURSDAY, June 18th

For those of you arriving early, remember we will not have an OTI this year, that will be held at our Fall Conference in Willmar, MN Sept. 18-20, 2026. The incoming Commander would like to get acquainted with the incoming District Officers on Saturday afternoon at 2:30 pm in the Scandinavian Ballroom. There will be department committee meetings all day. That evening, the VFW and

AUX Council of Administration meetings will be held to summarize and close any business for 2025-2026 year.

FRIDAY, June 19th

First thing, in the morning of the Convention, Curt Hermanson will be teaching a seminar, "Detailed instruction on how to use ScholarsApp". He welcomes all VFW and Auxiliary members to attend. Right after the seminar, we celebrate the accomplishments of our organization at the Joint Awards Session. Find out who excelled in all the great VFW programs. Special awards will be announced including All-State Post Commanders and All-State Post Quartermasters. Special

Convention - Cont. on Page 7



2025-2026 State Commander Ed Keogh

Member of VFW Post 5340 Montgomery, MN

My year as Department of MN State Commander is coming to an end. I enjoyed my experience leading the Department of Minnesota VFW. I have learned from others, taught others and encouraged others to achieve their goals. With that said, I encourage all members of the VFW to take on leadership roles at your Post, District and State levels. You can make a difference!

As I climbed the ladder beginning as Post 5340 Commander, continuing up the ladder in the 2nd District and finalizing the climb at the State level, I have gained friendships, enjoyed camaraderie, and gained knowledge to help keep the Veterans of Foreign Wars the best Veterans Organization in the World.

This past year I have visited every District in Minnesota along with many of Minnesota's Posts. I traveled to the VFW National Home for its Centennial celebration in June along with the membership meeting and fall festival in October of 2025. I want to thank all who have contributed to my Commander's project which is the National Home. In August I attended the National Convention in Columbus, OH. I also attended Commander-in-chief Carol Whitmore's Homecoming in Des

COMMANDER - Cont. on Page 12

MN VFW Meets Congress

By David Staehlin, Past Dept. Commander

A delegation of leaders from the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Minnesota traveled to Washington, D.C., February 28-March 4, 2026, to participate in the annual VFW Washington Conference, where they met with members of Congress and their staff to advocate for policies that support America's veterans, service

members, and military families.

The Minnesota VFW delegation was led by State Commander Ed Keogh and included, among others, National Council Member Dale Hoogeveen; National Legislative Committee members Barry

Congress - Cont. on Page 2



Rep. Betty McCollum visits with MN VFW members

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

Department of Minnesota, VFW
20 W 12th St
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Twin Cities, MN
1581
Permit NO.
PAID
U.S. Postage
Non-profit Org.

Please use the form on the reverse side to note any address changes

Save The Date!!

Minnesota Veterans Day on the Hill April 23, 2026 St. Paul, MN	National Convention July 25-29, 2026 Reno, NV	Big 10 Conference October 15-19, 2026 Kalamazoo, MI
State Convention June 18-21, 2026 Crowne Plaza Plymouth, MN	State Fall Conference September 18-20, 2026 Willmar Conf. Center Willmar, MN	State Midwinter Conference January 22-24, 2027 Marriott NW Brooklyn Park, MN

Upcoming VFW Events
Red Events are Department Events

Top News

MN Veterans Homes Receive \$80,000

The Minnesota Veterans Homes are honored to receive an \$80,000 donation from the VFW Charles McLaughlin Post 906 in Hutchinson, Minnesota for the fourth year in a row. The check was presented at the VFW Midwinter Conference on January 16, 2026.

Each of MDVA's eight State Veterans Homes in Bemidji, Fergus Falls, Hastings, Luverne, Minneapolis, Montevideo, Preston,

and Silver Bay will receive \$10,000. These funds will be used to enhance Resident activities and programming, purchase new equipment, and support initiatives that improve quality of life for our Veteran residents.

Thank you to the Department of Minnesota VFW and Charles McLaughlin Post 906 for your continued generosity and commitment to Minnesota Veterans and their families.

** Official Notice ** Proposed Bylaws & Resolutions

Proposed changes to the Department of Minnesota Bylaws will be announced in the Dept. General Orders and via Dept. E-Blast.

Additional Resolutions and Bylaw changes must be submitted via postal mail, email or faxed (651-291-2753) to the Department Headquarters and received no later than 4:30pm May 22, 2026. Bylaws and Resolutions submitted shall be specific and definite as to the Section, paragraph and line to be amended with exact wordings and deletions. Robert's Rules of Order allows Resolution and Bylaw changes to be amended if the amendments are within the scope of the proposed change.

The Department Judge Advocate is available to assist with the wording of a proposed change before it is submitted. Contact Todd Roberts via email at toddroberts10@tds.net. Proposed Bylaws and Resolution changes will be voted on at the State Convention in Plymouth, MN June 19-21, 2026.

Congress - Cont. from Page 2

Henriksen and Dr. James Tourila; and Minnesota Auxiliary President Julie Stoehr.

During the conference, the group met with Minnesota's congressional delegation to discuss key issues affecting veterans. Meetings were held with Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith of the U.S. Senate, as well as members of the U.S. House of Representatives including Kelly Morrison, Betty McCollum, Tom Emmer, Michelle Fischbach, and Pete Stauber. Delegates also met with staff members representing Brad Finstad, Angie Craig, and Ilhan Omar.

The purpose of these visits was to thank lawmakers for their continued support of legislation that benefits veterans and to thank them for their opposition to measures that could negatively impact the veteran community. Delegates also encouraged lawmakers to support - or oppose - specific bills when the legislators had not yet taken a public position.

Advocating directly with elected officials remains one of the VFW's most important missions. By sharing the experiences and concerns of veterans from across Minnesota,

VFW leaders help ensure that the voices of those who served are heard in the halls of Congress.

Additional details on specific legislative priorities discussed during the conference will be shared in a separate article written by Minnesota VFW National and State Legislative Officer Barry Henriksen, who will highlight key bills currently under consideration in Congress.

VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore testified before the U.S. Senate and House Joint Committee on Veterans Affairs in a packed hearing room where our Minnesota VFW and Auxiliary leaders were in attendance.

The Department of Minnesota, VFW was awarded the VFW 2025-2026 Legislative Award for exemplifying an effective legislative program. Accepting the award were Minnesota VFW members of the National VFW Legislative Committee members Barry Henriksen and Dr. James Tourila.

The Washington Conference continues to serve as a powerful opportunity for VFW leaders nationwide to speak with a united voice on behalf of veterans and their families.

MN COMMANDERS TASK FORCE PRESENTS: VETERANS DAY ON THE HILL 2026

**WHEN: APRIL 23RD
DOORS OPEN 9AM**

WHERE: CEDAR ST. ARMORY, ST. PAUL MN & MN CAPITOL ROTUNDA

FEATURING: 2 NATIONAL COMMANDERS AS SPEAKERS!



NO MEMBERSHIP IN ANY ORGANIZATION REQUIRED. ALL SUPPORTERS ARE WELCOME!
Details @ mnctf.org



Armory Featured Speakers:
American Legion National Commander Dan K. Wiley

&

DAV National Commander Coleman Nee

The DAV MN will cover 50% of the cost of a bus.

Reach out to Trent@davmn.org for details

Special Thanks to V4V for supporting funds



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

GOPHER OVERSEAS

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: Overseas@vfwmn.us - Webpage: www.vfwmn.org

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

The Gopher Overseas is the official publication of the Department of Minnesota, VFW.

It is published three times a year out of the State Headquarters building at: State Veterans Service Building, 20 W 12th St. Saint Paul, MN 55155.

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: _____

2025-2026 Department Officers

Senior Vice Commander

Charles Hawkins Sr.



Comrades, Brothers/Sisters
The VFW Line Officers and the Auxiliary Officers took a little trip to Washington DC for our National Legislative Conference.

Our plans were to meet with Minnesota's elected State Senators and Representatives. In order to accomplish this over a very short time frame, we split up into three groups. We participated in the mile and a half Army Memorial March that started at the Lincoln Memorial then went on to the Korean War memorial, the D.C. World War I memorial, the World War II memorial, then to the Vietnam Nurses statue, finishing with the Vietnam Wall. There was a speaker at each memorial that honored the efforts and memory of those veterans who came before. There were over 200 who braved the snow, wind and rain to participate in the march.

We were on hand when Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore addressed Congress and spoke about "the Contract" that young Americans made when they raised their right hands, swear an oath, and sign the DD Form 4. They agreed to surrender personal freedoms, obey lawful orders, and,

if called upon, risk life and limb in defense of this nation. In return, America made a promise that if they are wounded, become ill, or die in service, the country will care for them and their families. This is a binding, moral contract. Every man and woman who wore the uniform has already honored their end of it. America must uphold it part of "the Contract." CIC Whitmore stressed that America must not balance the budget on the backs of veterans. It must Honor the Contract.

I look forward to leading our Department Officers to next year's Legislative Conference.

We are closing in on that time of year when the Chain of Command is going to change, from the lowest to the highest. In the March General Orders on page 2, Department Delegate Fees, follow the instructions and you're all good. We don't want any of our Posts to be in the state of SUSPENSION for something like this. Just fill it out. If you are having trouble, ask your Post Adjutant for help. If that still doesn't solve the problem, call the Dept. Adjutant.

Stay safe my fellow Veterans. I look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming State Convention.

Junior Vice Commander

Mary Thompson



Proud of Where We Are
Focused on Where We're Going

As we close out another VFW year, I have reflected on the experiences that have shaped my time serving as your Department of Minnesota Junior Vice Commander. Traveling across the state, visiting Posts and Districts, and listening to members has deepened my appreciation for the dedication that keeps our organization strong.

Throughout the year, I have seen firsthand the commitment our members show in serving veterans, families, and communities. From honor guard ceremonies and community events to mentorship, membership growth, and legislative advocacy, the mission of the VFW is alive and well in Minnesota.

A meaningful moment this year was witnessing Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore represent our organization on the national stage. Seeing the first woman to lead the VFW speak on behalf of all veterans

was both historic and inspiring, and a reminder that the work we do locally strengthens our voice nationwide.

I am also proud that our Department performed very well during the recent National VFW inspection. This success reflects the professionalism and dedication of our Department office staff. I extend my sincere thanks to Adjutant/Quartermaster Barry Henriksen, Office Manager Cheryl Burton, and Administrative Assistant Char Guse for their tireless work supporting Posts and members across Minnesota.

This year has reinforced that the true strength of the VFW comes from its people. When we stay engaged, support one another, and remain focused on service, we build an organization ready to meet the needs of today's veterans and those who will follow.

As we enter a new VFW year, I encourage every Post and member to continue building on the progress we have made. Together, we will keep the Veterans of Foreign Wars strong.

Adjutant/ Quartermaster

Barry Henriksen



We have had a lot going on leading up to this issue of the Gopher Overseas'r. The Department had a very productive conference in Washington DC the first week of March. Including winning the National Award for "National Legislative Service". While we were in DC we heard the tragic news of the loss of life of MSG Nicole Amor from White Bear Lake. We had a moment of silence while meeting with our Congressional Delegation.

The second week of March we had our State Inspection. California State QM Deb Johnson and past Mississippi State A/Q Danny Williams spent two days going through a 24 page checklist. I don't want to hear any complaints about length of post or district inspections. It went very well. We will have opportunities to improve and there are several changes and updates that we will implement. It was a great learning experience. Thank you to Cheryl and Char for their help with the preparation.

If you missed the All-State deadline, you can still apply for All State. If you qualify, you will still receive a certificate and can purchase the cap for commander or quartermaster.

For All American you have until

June 30 qualify. The only thing you can't still report is Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy. Everything else is still attainable. VMS donation of \$125. At least one community service report per quarter. You can use the calendar icon on the dashboard entry to get credit for any quarter you are missing (call or email if you need help). Poppies can still be ordered (at least 500 for All American). Membership of at least 101%. And complete your Day of Service project. For any questions, please reach out to me.

Every post should try to send at least one delegate to the State Convention. It is where decisions are made about the future of our department. Vote for the candidate of your choice. Go to the awards ceremony. The Memorial program is always a moving event.

Make sure that your post is in good standing for convention. Delegate fees paid. Hospital and National Home assessments paid. Audits through March 31 submitted and approved by State HQ. QM Bonded. The fees must be paid whether you attend the convention or not. And they carry over to next year also.

Thank you for all that you do and see you at Convention!

Judge Advocate

Todd Roberts



My fellow Comrades and Auxiliary,

I've been really happy with how this year has been going. Visiting District and Post meetings has been a highlight for me, and it's great to see the strong sense of camaraderie among our members. Those conversations and connections truly remind me how special this organization is.

It's also been a very busy year, especially with our recent Legislative Conference in Washington, DC. Since this was my first time being involved in this kind of work, it was a real learning experience. Sitting down with legislators and talking through the veterans' bills we're advocating gave me a much better understanding of the process and the challenges we face.

Our membership is in good shape, but there's still more we can do. Please keep up the recruiting efforts, especially when it comes to reaching out to younger veterans. Let's

encourage them to get involved, offer guidance when we can, and be open to doing things a little differently as we move forward.

I look forward to seeing you all at State Convention. Be sure your Post has everything accomplished to be eligible to vote. Our department elections are very important just as your Post elections are, along with other items that will come to the floor for voting. We do have a couple of bylaw amendment proposals ready to be voted on, and if you feel there is anything that needs to change in our bylaws, please get the proposals submitted before convention so we can work with them. If you have any questions of how to submit a proposal, please let me know.

As we close this year out, I want to remind all you members that the Department officers are always here to help all Posts to accomplish great things. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need assistance with anything.



9TH ANNUAL SUMMERFEST
SATURDAY AUGUST 15TH, 2026

Minnesota Auxiliary News

STATE PRESIDENT
VFW Auxiliary



Julie Stoehr

Member of
VFW Post 1757 Auxiliary
Cook, MN



National District Council

By Sonia Tatge, Member Area E

On February 12, 2026, I attended my second Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US Auxiliary Council of Administration meeting during the 2026 Mid-Year Conference on Celebrity Reflection.

National VFW Auxiliary President Lois Callahan presided at the meeting. Several guests were welcomed to the meeting including VFW Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore, VFW Adjutant General Dan West, VFW Quartermaster General Marc Garduno, VFW Foundation Director Hal Roesch II, and VFW National Home Director Mike Wilson.

Following opening ceremonies, the Council Members were presented with Official Communications, Investments, Budget Reports, and Audit Reports since the last meeting held in August 2025 at National Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

Two main items reviewed by the Council were the 2025-2026 Proposed Standing Rules and the Legacy Life Membership Report.

First, under Standing Rules items were presented that applied to authorized travel by VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters personnel, National Council lodging on official visits, and money given to the parent of children at VFW National Home

for holiday usage.

Second, the Council heard from National Officers that a committee of officers had met and the Legacy Life Membership Program had been modified. This was the first time that these changes had been presented to all the Council Members. Many comments from Minnesota Auxiliary members had been forwarded to National Officers from me as your representative. Council members felt that a vote should not be taken to approve this program at this time. Therefore, the Legacy Life Membership Program vote has been postponed until National Convention in Reno, Nevada in July 2026. Council members are now waiting for the revised information so all Council members can report to their state Auxiliary members.

Please give me time to receive the revised plans and provide all Minnesota Auxiliary members with new information. There will be time for members to look over the plan and provide me with input before the National Council votes on this program in Reno 2026.

Thank you for our support. I will continue to give you updates as soon as I have official information from National VFW Auxiliary Headquarters.

Treasurer/Secretary Chair

By Laurie Dale, Treasurer/Secretary MN VFW Auxiliary

Hello Everyone,

Important deadlines

that you must adhere to:

- First Quarter Audit received at the Dept Office by May 31
- National Delegate/Alternates entered in MALTA by May 31
- Department Delegate/Alternate/Pre-Registration Form/Fees received at Dept. Office by June 4
- Installation Report Form received at Dept. Office by June 15

Please take a moment to refresh your knowledge of Section 308 of the VFW Auxiliary National Bylaws with regard to Arrearages Affecting Delegates. As we spin into the election season with District Conventions and Department Convention, it is imperative that we have all items submitted so that each VFW Auxiliary can have their full representation at these conventions. Any Auxiliary in arrears for District Dues shall be deprived

of representation at those District Meetings/Conventions.

Any Auxiliary in arrears for the following shall be deprived of Auxiliary representation on ALL levels:

1. Financial obligations to National HQ
2. Failing to have the offices of the President and Treasurer bonded
3. Failure to submit required quarterly audits (past four (4) consecutive audits due prior to the Convention.)

Be sure your VFW Auxiliary has all important tasks and documents taken care of and submitted to the proper authority to ensure that you will be represented at EVERY level of our organization. As Department Treasurer, I will be responsible for reporting to the Districts which Auxiliaries are missing Audits for the purpose of having accurate records for the District Conventions.

Greetings!

What an exciting year for me as the President of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, a great honor and one I will never forget.

This last month with the Midwinter Conference and turning around and heading to Washington DC for the last CAFÉ is an honor I will never forget. As many of you know we were at the Vietnam Wall with our National President Lois Callahan. This was emotional and heartbreaking, but at the same time an honor to know that we were honoring the deceased. It was a great honor to have Laurie Dale and Tammy Shell carrying the American flags behind me as we walked. My heartfelt thanks to both!

Then onto the Legislative Conference.... WOW! Our own Department of Minnesota Barry Henriksen and Jim Tuorila were recognized for Legislation for Minnesota by National for completing all the requirements that are required by the VFW National Legislative program! So very proud of them, thank you gentlemen for a job well done!

What a powerful Testimony that our Commander in Chief Carol Whitmore presented to the Veterans Advisory Committee. I was able to be in the main hall to listen, watch and to hear the cheering and knowing the strength that was portrayed in that room was truly amazing.

Unfortunately, the Major Richard Star Act Bill was not passed. Hopefully, with visiting with our Legislators about the Veterans of Foreign Wars Legislative Priorities it will have a positive outcome. Please Google [www.vfw.org/Legislative Priorities](http://www.vfw.org/LegislativePriorities) and read this information and please contact your Legislators. Our Veterans continue to need our assistance and that is why we belong to assist our Veterans and Families.

In the month of March our Auxiliaries will be gathering information from their past year to compile them into the year-end reports. A big job for sure. I am

looking forward to reading these reports to see what the great state of Minnesota has been doing for our Veterans, Families and community. I personally want to thank the chairman for the great monthly reports that they are doing for our General Orders.

The Department Convention will be held June 18th – 21st at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Plymouth Minnesota. Please get your reservations for your rooms and the banquet sent in a timely fashion. The Department VFW Office appreciates it. Also, remember Buddy Poppy chair Dave Scofield wants auxiliaries to decorate vases with Poppy flowers/decorations to use as center pieces on the banquet tables.

Thanks to all Posts and Auxiliaries who have worked together as a team in support of our Veterans. I truly appreciate it. Let's keep up the teamwork and remember there is no I in team. Working together helps promote unity and above all strength, for our Veterans and families and let's not forget the laughter, it is very uplifting.

Membership, Jean Keogh has been working hard for the Department for membership, let's get it done, we still have time, let's go out with a bang at 100% for the Auxiliary. I know you can do it.

I would like to thank Laurie Dale, Nanci Bohmer my right and left hands at the Department Office. Their years of experience, knowledge and patience were an immense help to me. And to Frankie Bill, Chief of Staff, thank you for guidance and laughter! My mentors, Darlene Jackson, Sonia Tatge, Jane Ziebarth, and all the other PDPs that gave gentle advisement throughout the year.... Bless you! It's been a pleasure to know that you all have had faith in me. Thank you to the VFW department staff. You have been a great help to me and to know that this is the reason I joined, because of our Veterans! Bless you and thank you for your service!

**Be the Anchor
to our Veterans Hearts**

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.

**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
SERVICE**

**Veterans Day
on the Hill**

Wednesday, April 12, 2025
St. Paul Nat'l Guard Armory

Claims and Service Office Report

By Jon Gohn, Claims Director

Note from the Director

As of today, our claims office continues to operate remotely. This is not optimal and we do not like it any more than our clientele do. With that said, this is not an office decision, but a directive from the Department of Veterans Affairs, in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security's threat assessment and recommendations. We still stand ready to help our clients.

However, based on our operational environment I am wholeheartedly encourage everyone needing assistance to start with their County Veteran Service Officer. To put things in context, nearly all counties have accreditation with the Veterans of Foreign Wars regarding claims. I am adding the website to find your local CVSO if you are unsure of who that is and where they are located. When you talk to your CVSO simply let them know that you wish to name the VFW as your Power of Attorney for VA claims.

I mandate that all county work still comes through our office for another review and set of eyes, ensuring that everything is correct prior to submission to the VA. This method helps with checks and balances to make sure you have the best representation possible.

I must iterate that in working with this organization for the past 12 years, Minnesota has one of the strongest county networks in the nation and the CVSOs here are top notch. I thank everyone for their understanding in our current situation, and know we would much rather be in the building to do the work we do for the veterans of Minnesota and their dependents.

<https://www.macvso.org/find-a-cvso.html>

VFW Commends VA for Listening to Veterans' Voices and Rescinding Rule

Policy change follows 10 days of public outcry from veterans, veteran service organizations and other stakeholders

February 27, 2026

WASHINGTON -- The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) commends the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for officially rescinding its interim final rule that would have changed how disability ratings are evaluated, a policy the VFW warned could unfairly reduce benefits for disabled veterans.

Since VA opened the rule for public comment, more than 20,000 comments have been submitted to the Federal Register urging the department to withdraw the policy.

"These last 10 days prove that when our veterans speak, leaders will listen," said VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore. "We thank Secretary of Veterans Affairs Doug Collins for hearing veterans' concerns and taking meaningful steps to reverse an abrupt policy

change that could have had far-reaching unintended consequences for veterans whose medication and other treatments allow them to live day-to-day with their service-connected health conditions."

Last week, the VFW publicly demanded VA rescind the rule change, raising "serious concerns" it threatened the benefits veterans earned through their service.

"The VFW has long maintained that no veteran should ever think they could be penalized for seeking the medical care they need," said Whitmore. "We appreciate VA's willingness to engage with veterans on this critical issue."

While this reversal is a significant step forward, the VFW will continue to work with Congress, VA, and other stakeholders to ensure that future policy changes are developed with full transparency, genuine veteran input and a steadfast commitment to protecting the benefits and well-being of all veterans.

Major Richard Starr Act Blocked yet Again

The following is a message from VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore

March 3, 2026

WASHINGTON -- Today, Ranking Member Blumenthal asked for unanimous consent for passage of S. 1032, the Major Richard Star Act, on the floor of the U.S. Senate. This is the first time the motion was made since it failed to pass in October, held up then by Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi. I regret to announce that it was turned down again, this time by Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin. I am appalled by the resistance by certain members of Congress to care for veterans who have sacrificed so much for this nation.

As I testified earlier today before a special joint hearing of the United States Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs, the Major Richard Star Act will fix the unjust offset affecting more than 50,000 medically retired combat veterans. This is not double-dipping. This is double sacrifice. Veterans have fulfilled their obligation. Now, the country must Honor the Contract. Not partially, not eventually, not someday, but today, fully and faithfully. Stop the procedural games, have a real hearing, and get this done. Pass the Major Richard Star Act now!

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

BIANCHI - Cont. from Page 1

South Dakota State University in Brookings, SD with a major in animal science. To help pay for college, he joined the ROTC program where he attained the rank of cadet major.

Upon graduation, Bill was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in the U.S. Army. He requested foreign service duty and in April, 1941 was assigned to the 45th Infantry Regiment, Philippine Scouts in the Philippines. His primary duty was to train Filipino soldiers to be jungle fighters. With limited resources, he along with other officers of the 1st American Expeditionary Force were tasked to prepare defenses against the advancing Japanese military.

When the Japanese landed and advanced toward Manila, American and Filipino troops were forced into a fighting retreat onto the Bataan Peninsula. They lacked adequate equipment, armor, and aircraft.

It was on February 3, 1942, near Bagac in the Province of Bataan, that then-First Lieutenant Bianchi in an engagement known as the Toul River Pocket where he distinguished himself in combat. Bianchi

voluntarily lead a rifle platoon that had been ordered to eliminate two heavily fortified enemy machine gun nests. He was wounded by two bullets through his left hand. Refusing first aid, he discarded his rifle and continued fighting with a pistol. After locating a machine gun position and personally silenced it with grenades, he was wounded a second time by two machine gun bullets through the chest muscles. Bill then climbed atop an American tank and manned its anti-aircraft machine gun. He was firing into enemy positions when a third severe wound knocked him completely off the tank. His actions helped weaken the Japanese defenses enough that they were later captured with little or no additional loss of life.

It was because of his bravery and valor above and beyond the call of duty that Bill was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

After a one month recovery period at a base hospital, he returned to active duty and was promoted to Captain.

Following the fall of Bataan on April 9, 1942,, Captain Bianchi was captured by Japanese forces along

with approximately 75,000 American and Filipino soldiers.

They were held without food or water for 24 hours and then were forced onto the infamous 65-mile Bataan Death March. Bianchi was repeatedly seen helping fellow prisoners, encouraging them, and preventing many from being killed by their captors as they endured suffering from hunger, dehydration, heat, and disease.

Captain Bianchi was imprisoned at several camps, including Camp O'Donnell, Cabanatuan, and later Bilibid Prison in Luzon. With each transfer, conditions worsened. Prisoners endured starvation diets, forced labor, lack of medical care, and unsanitary living conditions. He bartered with guards to obtain food from Japanese mess halls and helped distribute rations fairly, refusing to favor himself or others.

In December Bianchi and others were loaded onto the Japanese transport ship Oryoku Maru. After that ship was sunk, he was transferred to another unmarked prison ship, the Enoura Maru, which was anchored off Formosa. On the morning of January 9, 1945, an

American aircraft, unaware that Allied prisoners of war were aboard, dropped a 1,000 pound bomb into the ship's hold. 29 year old Captain Bianchi was killed instantly.

The Congressional Medal of Honor was presented posthumously to his mother, Carrie Bianchi, on June 7, 1946, at Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

For decades, Captain Bianchi was buried as an unknown at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu and was memorialized on the Walls of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery.

His remains were positively identified on August 11, 2025 through advances in forensic science and DNA analysis. This has allowed him to make the final trip back home. Captain Willibald "Bill" Charles Bianchi never married and left no direct descendants. It has been through work done by his sisters and their families that his legacy has been preserved.

Captain Bianchi's life stands as a testament to courage, selflessness, and unwavering character. He was a hero in battle, a protector in captivity, and a symbol of sacrifice whose story will continue to inspire generations.

Message From Your National Council Member

By Dale Hoogveen,
National Council Member

The National Council of Administration met in Arlington, Virginia on March 1, 2026, in conjunction with the annual Washington Conference. The efforts throughout the year by our national legislative staff culminated with Commander in Chief Carol Whitmore's testimony before a joint session of the House & Senate Veteran's Affairs Committees. The hearing room was once again standing room only and loud cheers filled the air when Ranking Member Senator Richard Blumenthal, (D), Connecticut, announced he would be requesting unanimous consent for the Major Richard Star Act. A noble gesture on his part, however, unanimous consent allows a single senator to prevent passage. Last year, Senator Roger Wicker, (R), Mississippi, cast the dissenting vote, this year, Senator Ron Johnson, (R), Wisconsin, wielded the dagger.

We've been working diligently since 2021 to right the injustice done when retirement compensation is offset by disability compensation for veterans rated less than 50%. Fortunately, veterans don't surrender and we'll continue the fight! I encourage you to view Chief Whitmore's testimony at vfw.org – following that, sign up for the Action

Corps Weekly at Action Center and respond when requested to support legislative efforts.

Recognizing the importance of advocacy and the pursuit of legislation to protect existing veteran benefits as well as new and justly earned benefits, the Department of Minnesota added Dr. Jim Tuorila to our legislative team led by Adj/QM Barry Henriksen. They promptly went out and earned the inaugural legislative award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars – well deserved and thank you!

The Budget and Finance Committee met on February 28, 2026, to review the operating budget and reported all departments are on track to meet year end totals. Fundraising efforts continue to be strong with net investment income for operations reaching \$2.9 million to date for the fiscal year. Renovation of the Washington, DC continues with the goal of providing a workplace worthy of our great employees and creating the potential for increased revenue from the rental space.

The council approved a 6% compensation credit to the VFW National Headquarters Employee Retirement Plan for current eligible employees in the plan. The Council also authorized Life Membership payouts of \$10.50 for Plans A,B, & C, \$12.54 for Plan D, and \$24.30 for Plan E.

Department Commander Ed Keogh, Auxiliary President Julie Stoehr and the entire contingent of line officers, VFW members and auxiliary members did a wonderful job advocating on Capitol Hill! Thank you for your time and efforts – you represented the Department of Minnesota and the Veterans of Foreign Wars superbly.

Midwinter Conference Poppy Contest Results

By Charles Cossette, Dept. Poppy Chairman

The Midwinter Conference Poppy Contest had some really great displays entered.

For this years contest, there were a total of 25 entries. The breakdown is as follows:

- 5 entries in Category One
- 7 entries in Category Two
- 13 entries in Category Three

There were a total of 5,429 Buddy Poppies used in all of the displays. With a total of 549.5 hours spent on the displays.

This year's judges included: Dan Meyer, Troy Helget, Renate King, Richard Koch, Stacy Bruch, and Dana Slimmer.

The winners are as follows:

Category 1: Public Promotion of Poppies

1. Lake City Post 8729, District 1
2. Browerville Post 8391, District 6
3. Crystal Post 494, District 7



Category Two Winner
Lakeville Post 210



Category One Winner
Lake City Post 8729

Category 2: Memorial or Inspirational Displays

1. Lakeville Post 210, District 2
2. Bloomington Post 1296, Dist. 7
3. Rochester Post 1215, District 1

Category 3: Artistic or Decorative Use of Poppies

1. Northfield Post 4393, District 1
2. Wells Post 1778, District 2
3. Owatonna Post 3723, District 1

Thanks to all that entered.



Category Three Winner
Northfield Post 4393

The Wall That Heals visits White Bear Township

The Wall That Heals is a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It along with a mobile Education Center is coming to White Bear Township on August 6-9, 2026 at Polar Lakes Park. It will be open 24 hours a day and is free to the public. The Wall That Heals honors the more than three million Americans who served in the U.S. Armed forces in the Vietnam War, and it bears the names of the 58,281 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.

The White Bear Lake Area Historical Society in cooperation with the White Bear Lake Township the Keep-Zimmer VFW Post 1782 and American Legion Post 168 is bringing this important exhibit to the area.

This is the only site in Minnesota where you will be able to experience the Wall in 2026. In addition to the Wall are educational exhibits, displays, videos, The Hometown Heroes display containing the names of local service members on the Wall, a map of Vietnam and a timeline of the Vietnam War.

This 3/4 size replica of the Wall

is 375 feet in length and stands 7.5 feet high at its tallest point. Visitors are able to do name rubbings of individual service member's names on The Wall.

"The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is pleased to bring The Wall That Heals mobile exhibit to White Bear Township to allow local veterans and their family members a chance to experience The Wall," said Jim Knotts, president and CEO of VVMF. "Hosting The Wall That Heals provides an opportunity to honor and remember all those who served and sacrificed in the Vietnam War and educate visitors on the continuing impact of the Vietnam War on America."

The exhibit is transported from community to community in a 53-foot trailer. When parked, the trailer opens with exhibits built into its sides, allowing it to serve as a mobile Education Center telling the story of the Vietnam War, the establishment of The Wall and how the Memorial and Vietnam transformed the way our nation treats its veterans and service members.

Scammer Alert

All VFW members need to be aware of an increase in internet and phone scams that are targeting veterans and members of veteran service organizations. This includes attempted Cyber Attacks on our Organization.

Cybersecurity researchers have already identified multiple scam campaigns referencing the conflict in Iran in emails and messages designed to trick people into sending money or personal information.

One of the most common scams

involves someone impersonating a VFW officer, friend, or commander asking members to purchase gift cards, send money or provide financial assistance for an "urgent situation."

No VFW officer or staff member will ever ask this of you. If you receive a suspicious message, that appears to come from the VFW or one of its officers, contact that person directly using a known phone number before responding.

Poppy Days 2026



Last Call - Order Poppies Now!!

Poppy days are:

May 15-16, 2026

Is your Post ready?
Are You Ready?

2026 State Convention - June 18-21, 2026



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS - DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA



VFW MIDWINTER CONFERENCE

June 18-21, 2026
 Crowne Plaza, 3131 Campus Drive
 Plymouth, MN 55441
 Tentative (3-19-2026)

THURSDAY, June 18

9:00 - 10:00am	Pre-Con Meeting (Closed mtg)	Boardroom 1
10:30 - 11:30am	VFW Internal Affairs Committee (Closed mtg)	Boardroom 1
11:30 - 1:00pm	Lunch	Hotel or local eatery
12:00 - 4:00pm	VFW Convention Registration/Credentials	Fireside Lounge
1:00 - 2:00pm	Finance Committee Meeting	Boardroom 1
2:00 - 6:00pm	Veterans Home Displays	Conference Rooms C & B
2:30 - 4:30pm	Gambling Meeting	Scandinavian Ballroom
2:30 - 4:30pm	MN VFW Charitable Association Meeting	Conference Room E
6:00 - 8:00pm	VFW Council of Administration	Scandinavian Ballroom

FRIDAY, June 19

7:00 - 4:00pm	Veterans Home Displays/Commander's Project	Conference Rooms C & B
8:00 - 9:00am	Detailed "How to Use Scholarsapp" Seminar taught by Curt Hermanson	Scandinavian Ballroom
8:00 - 2:00pm	VFW Convention Registration/Credentials	Fireside Lounge
8:45 - 9:15am	VFW Riders Arrive at Convention	Front of Hotel
9:30 - 11:30am	Joint Awards Session	Regency
11:30 - 1:00pm	Lunch	Hotel or local eatery
11:30 - 1:00pm	PDC & PDP Luncheon	Conference Room H
1:00 - 2:00pm	VFW Committee Meeting Assignments	
	1. National Security/Foreign Affairs/POW	Conference Room E
	2. Bylaws/Rituals/Rules	Oslo/Stockholm
	3. Gen. Resolutions/Extension/Membership	Conference Room D
	4. Finance/Internal Affairs	Conference Room F
	5. Legislative/Veteran's Service	Conference Room G
6:00 - 7:00pm	Joint Memorial Service	Regency

SATURDAY, June 20

8:00 - 1:00pm	VFW Convention Registration/Credentials	Fireside Lounge
8:00 - 3:00pm	Veterans Home Displays/Commander's Project	Conference Rooms C & D
9:00 - 3:00pm	Open VFW Convention	Scandinavian Ballroom
Noon - 1:00pm	Lunch	Hotel or local eatery
1:15 - 2:15pm	VFW All Caucuses Districts 1-9	Scandinavian Ballroom
2:30 - 3:30pm	Incoming District Officers Meeting (Charles Hawkins, Sr.)	Scandinavian Ballroom
4:00 - 5:00pm	Catholic Service	Conference Room E
4:00 - 5:00pm	Non-Denominational Bible Study	Boardroom 1
6:00 - 6:45pm	Social (Cash Bar)	Scandinavian Lobby
6:00pm	Hospitality Rooms closed during Banquet	
6:45pm	Banquet Doors Open	Scandinavian Ballroom
7:00pm	Banquet	Scandinavian Ballroom

SUNDAY, June 21

7:30 - 8:30am	VFW Convention Registration/Credentials	Fireside Lounge
9:00 - 11:00am	VFW Convention	Scandinavian Ballroom
Immediately following	Joint Installation of Officers	Regency
	Closing Business Sessions for the VFW & Aux Conventions	
12:00 - 12:30pm	Council of Administration Meeting	Regency

Commander & President Reception -- August 16, 2026

Coon Rapids Post 9625
 1919 Coon Rapids Blvd. NW
 Coon Rapids, MN 55433
 Noon to 6:00pm
 Food & DJ



Convention - Cont. from Page 1

awards will also be announced for the Auxiliary Hospital Volunteer of the Year. We also celebrate the Public Servant Award Citation Winners.

In the afternoon, the VFW Committees will meet, a Gambling session will be held for anyone interested. The Auxiliary opens their Convention which will have many highlights, including awards for local Auxiliaries and Districts for their good work during the past year. Friday evening ends in the annual Joint Memorial Service that brings us the opportunity to honor VFW and Auxiliary members we have lost over the year. Please attend as this is always a memorable event.

SATURDAY, June 20th

The VFW and AUX Conventions head into full swing, each conducting the official business of their organizations. This will include nominations for 2026-27 State Officers and discussion of Bylaw proposals for the upcoming year as well as National Bylaws and Resolutions. Decisions made at these meetings will not only direct our organization locally but guide

our State Officers as they head to the National Convention in July.

The Banquet Menu will be Roast Beef in a Stout Gravy, Grilled Broccoli, Herb Roasted Red Potatoes, salad, roll and two types of dessert: Strawberry Swirl and Caramel. Remember, this is a Banquet, not a restaurant, please let the hotel serving staff do their jobs. If you need something extra, please wait until everyone has been served. There is limited seating for this banquet as the room capacity is for 280 people. First come, first served. If you have dietary requirements, please email officemanager@vfwmn.us.

SUNDAY, June 21st

The conclusion to a busy Convention, we will feature the elections of VFW and AUX Officers that will lead us into the New Year. The Officers will be installed immediately after the Convention Sessions. Please attend and support the 2026-27 State Commander and State President. This year's Joint Reception will be held at the Coon Rapids VFW Post 9625 on August 16, 2026, from Noon to 6 pm.

HOUSING RESERVATIONS

VFW State Convention 2026
 Thursday, June 18 -- Sunday, June 21, 2026
 Crowne Plaza
 3131 Campus Drive, Plymouth, MN 5541
 For Reservations call 763-559-6600

Be Specific, Say: 2026 ANNUAL STATE CONVENTION
 Room Rate: \$119/night + tax
 (Standard King OR Two Double Beds)
 Check in: 3pm Check out: Noon

DEADLINE -- May 27, 2026

Reserve online at vfwmn.org/news/state_convention then click on the link

Annual Convention Banquet

Saturday, June 20, 2026

Tickets \$50/person (No Refunds)

Reception 5:30 - 6:45pm Doors open at 6:45pm

Deadline: Friday, May 22, 2026

Menu: Roast Beef with a stout brown gravy, Grilled Broccoli, Herb Roasted Red Potatoes, House Sales w/dressing, Dinner Rolls, Strawberry Swirl OR Caramel Dessert, Coffee, and Water.

Banquet/Dinner Tables seat 10 people

Tickets will NOT be mailed.

(Tickets will be at the Registration Table in the Fireside Lounge)

Mail & Make checks payable to: **Veterans of Foreign Wars, Dept. of MN**
Rice Street Station
PO Box 17146
St. Paul, MN 55117

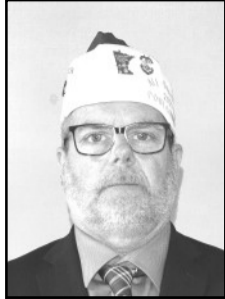
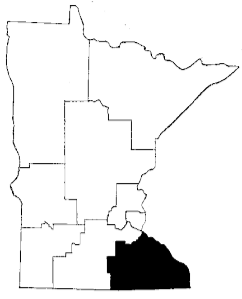
Please Reserve _____ Tickets at \$50/person 2026 State Convention Banquet.

Name: _____

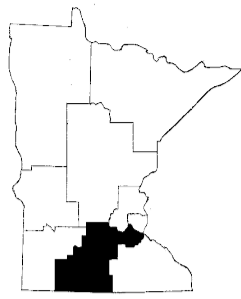
Phone: _____ Post/Auxiliary # _____ District # _____

Email: _____

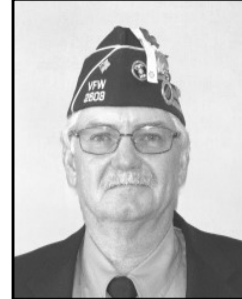
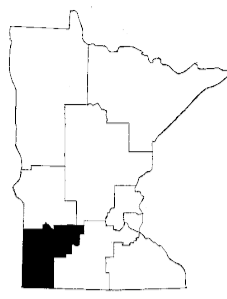
News from YOUR District Commanders and Presidents!



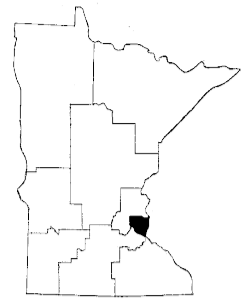
**Troy Helget, Commander
First District**



**Cheryl Burton, Commander
Second District**



**Merle Rabenberg, Commander
Third District**



**Sean Gustafson, Commander
Fourth District**

Hello Comrades & Auxiliary
Wow!! What an exciting and developing year it has been for me as your District Commander. I have learned there are so many tasks being completed behind the scenes every day by dedicated folks. I would like to say thank you to all!

May 2nd is the VFW Day of Service. It is such an important day for our communities and our organizations. It displays our commitment to our communities and that we are always serving them. These events also help our membership retention programs. Don't forget to complete your important Day of Service reports.

The Department Convention will be held in Plymouth Minnesota June 18-21. I would really like to see a greater participation by 1st District members this year. What a great opportunity to meet other VFW Post members and share insights and experiences to improve your posts in your community. Please join us!

Membership this year has been very successful. Currently we are sitting at 99% with more room to grow. Posts with successful membership programs please share your strategies with other posts in the district. We are one team and should always keep supporting each other. Recruitment is for all the VFW abroad always!

I hope all Post Poppy Committees have their distribution plans in place and are ready for May 22nd. Sharing poppies with your community is the first step. Teaching members of your community what the poppy means and the history of the buddy poppy is also a very important objective. Its a meaningful message and should be shared with all and not just some cute flower the local VFW distributes.

Again, thank you all and see you at April Loyalty Days and Department Convention in June, have an amazing Easter and spend time with your Families.



**Kris Kohn, Auxiliary
President First District**

As I start to look back at this program year, I realize how fortunate I have been to lead such an amazing District of men and women who are truly dedicated to living the mission of the VFW Auxiliary.

DIST. 1 AUX. - Cont. on Page 10

Greetings,
I want to take a moment to personally thank each Post in District 2 for the hard work, dedication, and commitment you continue to show to our great organization, the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

First, congratulations to those Posts who have achieved 101% membership and higher. That is an outstanding accomplishment.

Congratulations to the following posts for achieving 101% or above in membership in District 2: Montgomery 110.94%; Hastings 106.64%; Winsted 102.78%; Prior Lake 101.29%; Fairmont 102.17%. District 2 has seven posts that are at 100%.

To the seven Posts currently at 100%, well done. Hitting a goal is an achievement, but I encourage you not to stop there. Push to 101%. Every additional member strengthens your Post, your community presence, and the overall impact of the VFW.

Membership growth is not just about numbers. It ensures that the Veterans of Foreign Wars remains strong, relevant, and capable of fulfilling our mission to serve veterans, service members, and their families.

Mark your calendars as Loyalty Day will be held April 25, 2026, at Post 6208 in Prior Lake and bring something for the auction as this is our yearly fundraising event. Attendance at our district meetings was outstanding, and I encourage you to keep showing up and representing your Post and District with pride.

As I write my final article for the "Gopher Overseas" as your District Commander, it has truly been an honor and a privilege to serve and I deeply appreciate the trust and opportunity you gave me to represent District 2.

I would like to personally thank Post 6208 in Prior Lake for its remarkable \$20,000 donation to "Every Third Saturday", as well as the many other posts that contributed to the Joint Commander and President Project. These contributions reflect the spirit of service that defines our organization.

I would also like to recognize Hutchinson Post 906 for its extraordinary \$100,000 donation to the eight Minnesota Veterans Homes.

To those considering running for an elected position, I encourage you to take that step. It is truly an honor to be elected and to serve your fellow comrades in this capacity.

DIST. 2 AUX. - Found on Page 14

Greetings from the VFW Third District

I hope this article finds you all in good health. It has been a both a mild and a harsh winter down here down here in Southwest Minnesota. If the wind wasn't blowing 50mph and -20 below it was 40 above. For the most part, it was in the later, but it started looking like it was going to be a long winter in mid-November. Now the birds are back and the robins have had snow on their feet 2 times (Mom used to say they had to have snow on their feet 3 times). I so hope she was right.

The Minnesota VFW Midwinter Conference was good and we had good attendance. It was good to see everyone from the other districts.

Our Third District meeting was the weekend before at Voak-Janssen VFW Post 3958 in Worthington where we recognized all our contest winners. April 4th will be our next District meeting at the Westbrook Community Center hosted by VFW Post 5098. We continue to rock with our recruiting with Redwood County VFW Post 2553 leading the pack and Minneota-Taunton VFW Post 5334 a close second. Keep up the AWESOME work.

Now is the time to plan your Memorial Day and flag day festivities. In addition to the Memorial Day ceremony Pacholl-Moser Wilmont Post 2603 will conduct a flag burning ceremony June 14th. At the conclusion of the burning we will be giving away about ten bicycles to the youth that helped with the burning.



**Diane Rabenberg, Auxiliary
President Third District**

Greetings from District 3!

We had the pleasure of honoring our district Voice of Democracy, Patriots Pen, and Smart/Maher Teacher of the Year winners after our January 3rd meeting in Worthington.

Next we look forward to filling out year-end reports and to our next meeting on April 4th at Westbrook.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our officers and chairmen for their work this last year! You are the reason we are successful!

This is election time and I hope to see everyone at the meeting, ready and willing to serve our organization as we strive to be the anchor to our veterans hearts!

Happy Easter, Passover, and Springtime, Fighting Fourth!

Hope you all had tremendous holidays and are gearing up for Memorial Poppy Season. Huge Congratulations to Roseville, our #1 Post for Strength, followed very closely by White Bear and Mendota all over 100% and Cottage Grove close behind them. Please feel free to ask these top Posts what they are doing if you're looking for ideas.

This year's Memorial Day will hit especially hard with the loss of one of our local Soldiers from White Bear Lake in the current conflict. Please remember to honor MSG Nicole Amor and her family. There is an article elsewhere in this paper with more information.

We are nearing the end of the VFW year (July '25-June '26). As always, we would sure love your presence at our District Meeting on 25 April (8am Memorial, 9am Meeting) at Roseville Post 5555, and at the State Convention, 18-21 June in Plymouth

If you're looking for a worthy cause to donate to, you couldn't do much better than Believet Canine Service Partners out of Northfield, MN, our District President's Project. They take donated and rescue dogs, train them for 12-18 months as Service Dogs for Vets with PTS, then give them totally free of charge to our Veteran brothers and sisters!

Finally, thank you sincerely for the honor of being your District Commander for these last two years. The Capitol District will always be first in my heart.



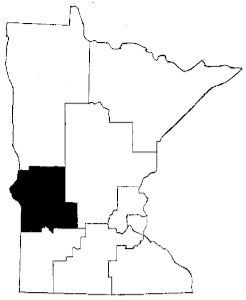
**Deb Courts-Brown, Auxiliary
President Fourth District**

Greetings from District 4

As we approach the time for year-end reports it's a good time to look back on what some of the auxiliaries have done in the last few months or are planning for the next few months. Auxiliary 1350 sells hot dogs during Saturday's Bar bingo Noon-3pm and Dagos the 1st Monday of each month from 5-7pm.

Auxiliary 9024 donated two (2) patriotic books to an area elementary school, purchased a subscription of Veterans Voice Writing Project magazine for Hastings Vets Home, hosted bingo at Hastings Veterans Home and gave Valentine's Day cards and treats to veterans in the senior living home. They also had

DIST. 4 AUX. - Cont. on Page 14



Lee Christopherson, Commander
Fifth District

Greetings from the 5th!

First off out of the gate I would like to thank the Commanders and Quartermasters for the help in getting the post inspections completed. This year I did all the inspections myself because, as the District Commander, I really wanted to get the true pulse of the District. What a fine education or more of an eye opener it was. One thing I got educated on was the relationship between the Post Membership and Auxiliary, I found out in some case there was no relationship. We need to change that so both organizations will thrive in the future.

Let us talk membership. In my inspection venture and being the district mouth piece, I saw up and close the struggle of keeping the ranks filled. I'm not say the Post's are sitting on there hands, but under the contrary they are beating the bush for members and many cases coming up empty. They keep on recruiting. For that, I have the up most respect.

Lastly, I would like to shine a spotlight on a few Posts in the 5th. Madison Post 1656 and Osakis Post 7902 have done outstanding work on their Bingo Events. These events bring in revenue but they also bring in potential members. Alexandria Post 936 great work for their Coffee & Rolls on Friday with speech from veterans about their service to our great country.

On a sad note, Osakis Post 7902 Auxiliary lost a great person and a stable hand in the Post. Judy Jensen passed away on March 4th. She will most certainly be missed.

Our next District meeting is scheduled for April 19th at Madison Post 1656 at 2 PM. With upmost respect, I highly encourage the members of the 5th District to please be at the meeting especially Post Commanders.

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



Cindi Nelson, Auxiliary
President Fifth District

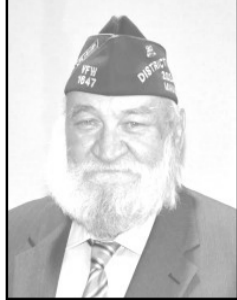
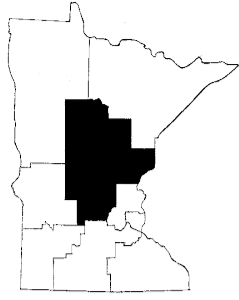
Good day from District 5.

We were busy over the winter with several projects within our Auxiliary's.

I was blown away with our VOD winner at Midwinter Conference. If you missed it, you absolutely must go to it next year. It is amazing how much talent our VOD students have.

Our next District meeting will be in Madison on April 19th. There will be a special guest coming from the Montevideo Veterans Home. We will

DIST. 5 AUX. - Cont. on Page 10



Donald Lohse, Commander
Sixth District

Greetings from your Commander of the "Fighting" 6th District!

At the last District meeting in December, we presented awards to the Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy winners. Kierra Lease, Litchfield VFW Post 2818, earned First Place for VOD. Scarlett Salakian, Brainerd VFW Post 1647, earned First Place for Patriot's Pen. Thank you to all Posts that submitted nominations and to all the participants!

February 20-22, Jenkins VFW Post 3839 hosted their first "Death from Above" Northern Pike Ice Fishing Contest. Proceeds from that event went to Folds of Honor of Minnesota.

March 14, 2026 Sauk Rapids VFW Post 6992 hosted the VFW State pistol competition for the second year in a row.

The VFW State Safety Committee completed judging applicants and selected Amber Percy, sponsored by Randall VFW Post 9073, as the VFW Public Servant Safety Award recipient.

April 4, 2026 Maple Lake VFW Post 7664 and Maple Lake American Legion Post 131 will be having a 2nd Amendment Bingo event. There will be over \$11,500.00 in prizes. Breakfast starts at 9 am, bingo cards on sale at 10:00 am, and the game starts at noon.

The next District meeting will be held in Jenkins, at Post 3839, April 25, 2026 starting at 10:00am. It will be a joint session with the Auxiliary, in a Loyalty Day Ceremony. Lunch will follow, then the business session will wrap up with nominations and election of officers for the 2026/27 business year.



Peg Snoko, Auxiliary
President Seventh District

Brothers and Sisters of the Auxiliary and Comrades. Greetings from the 7th District.

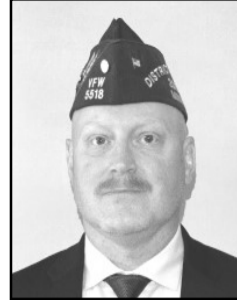
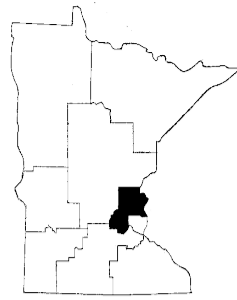
This year is coming to an end way too fast. Year end reports and data is being compiled and awards will be given.

Our April Convention is coming soon and there will be the election of new officers and then we will be headed to Department Convention to wrap up this exciting year.

In February there was the Salute to Veterans which was a great opportunity to pass out valentines and visit with our Veterans.

It has been such a busy year honoring and helping our Veterans. What an accomplishment.

Thank you to all the auxiliary and district officers for a great 2025-2026 year.



Dennis Maddox, Commander
Seventh District

Greetings

I hope this message finds you well.

Elections:

March marks the beginning of nominations with April having continued nominations and elections for Post Officers. All members are strongly encouraged to consider serving in an officer capacity.

Nominations and elections for District leadership positions will take place during the April 25 District Convention.

Veterans Day on the Hill 2026

This years' event will be held on Thursday, April 23, 2026 at the St. Paul Armory. Doors open at 0900 hours. A lunch provided with presentation at 1300 hours in the State Capitol. Wear your cover.

State Convention: will be held on June 18-21 in Plymouth at the Crowne Plaza Minneapolis West. Make your reservations and order banquet tickets now.

Membership Update:

The District currently stands at 97.84% membership. To reach the 101% National goal, we need 157 additional members.

District Commander's

Membership Challenge:

As previously announced, if a Post achieves the 101% National membership goal, the District Commander's \$2,500 stipend will be divided among the Post Commanders of the qualifying Posts.

If all 20 Posts reach 101%, each Post Commander would receive \$125.

****Important Condition:****

In addition to individual Post performance, the District must finish the membership year ranked within the top 10 of National Division 2. The question remains, can we accomplish this goal together and make this an all volunteer year for the District Commander?

Department Commander's Project Challenge:

The 7th District is currently leading by approximately \$14,000. Continued support and contributions are essential to closing the gap.

Please ensure that all Community Service activities performed by Post members are accurately and properly reported.

Upcoming District Meeting & Convention

Our next meeting is on Saturday, April 25 at Coon Rapids Post 9625. The Memorial Service begins at 0830 hours followed by the District meeting and elections.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our veterans, our Posts, and our District.

DISTRICT MEETINGS

First District

Apr. 25 Rochester #1215 @ 9:30 AM

Second District

Apr. 25 Prior Lake #6208 @ 8:30 AM

Third District

Apr. 4 Westbrook #5098 @ 10:00 AM

Fourth District

Apr. 25 Roseville #7555 @ 9:00 AM

Fifth District

Apr. 19 Madison #1658 @ 2:00 PM

Sixth District

Apr. 25 Jenkins #3839 @ 12:30 AM

Seventh District

Apr. 25 Coon Rapids #9625 @ 8:30 AM

Eighth District

May 2 Proctor #137 @ 9:00 AM

Ninth District

May 2 Bemidji #1260 @ 9:00 AM

MOC

May 16 Hopkins #425 @ 9:00 AM



Don't forget to change your address before you head back South for the winter.



Denise Biggs, Auxiliary
President Sixth District

Greetings to all

The Sixth District is desperately seeking spring. Of course, we get a taste of it here and there but then winter comes roaring back. As I write this some places in the state got 20 plus inches of snow.

We've had an eventful winter, with students polishing up and presenting their Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pens Speeches. Art contest projects are due at the end of March. Thank you to all the students who submitted entries. Congratulations to the winners. Good luck to all art contest participants.

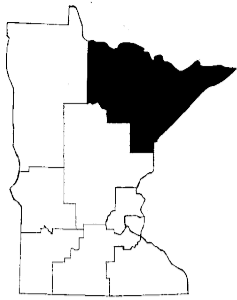
Thank you to parents, teachers and other adults in the lives of these students who have supported and encouraged them to enter the VFW/VFW Auxiliary contests.

We are looking toward spring and summer. There are plenty of things planned, including Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, many summer festivals, parades and Freedom Fests.

Don't forget our 6th District meeting and elections on April 25 at the Jenkins Post 3839.

Also, we have the Dept. VFW Auxiliary Convention June 18-21 at the Crowne Plaza in Plymouth.

See you at the Convention.



Charles Cossette, Commander Eighth District

Comrades, and Auxiliary Members of the 8th District,

It has been an honor to serve as your District Commander. I am very proud to represent us at the various functions I attend and work to promote the activities happening across our Mighty District 8. Please keep posting your activities on your social media pages. I will continue to do my best to spread the word through the District and the state to assist in getting the word out as far as possible to help awareness and attendance.

The District 8 Loyalty Days meeting is coming up. I hope to see as many of you there as possible. It will be held at VFW Post 137, in Proctor. Please check the District 8 facebook page for details or ask your post leadership. All members in good standing are welcome. The Department Convention this June 18-21, in Plymouth. Come and represent your amazing Post and the Might District 8. Our voices must be heard.

The long winter is nearly over and Spring is upon us. I hope everyone is excited to get out in the community and get new members. There are a lot of events throughout our district. If you want to put out an information booth to promote awareness and membership and need assistance don't hesitate to reach out to me, I will be happy to help.

Our membership numbers are down but we can bring them back up. Continue to check on those members you haven't heard from in a while and see if they need help or would be interested in coming to a meeting and/or getting involved back in the post. Remind them that just showing up is getting involved. We need that.

Finally, I will finish with a quote, "Some people live an entire lifetime and wonder if they ever made a difference in the world. A veteran doesn't have that problem." Ronald Reagan.

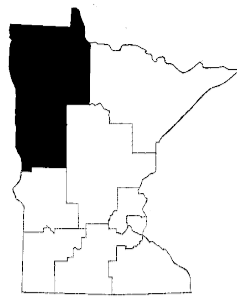
I am proud to be a member of this organization. You are the reason that I continue to serve. All I ask for in return is that you be proud of yourself, all of our VFW brothers and sisters, and all of our Auxiliary members supporting us. Together we are an unstoppable force that will continue to do great things for our fellow Veterans and their families.



Shirley Quist, Auxiliary President Ninth District

The Greetings from the Ninth District VFW Auxiliary.

Every time we think spring is here, we receive a cruel reminder that winter still has a hold on us.



Curtis Anderson, Commander Ninth District

Aloha Comrades,

As we close out this officer year in the 9th District, I want to extend my congratulations to the Moorhead Boys AA Hockey Team and the Warroad Boys A Hockey Team for bringing home their state titles. Outstanding work by those young athletes—and thank you to the VFW Posts in those communities for the support you've given them along the way.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at our March Meeting in New York Mills on the 21st, as well as at our District Convention on May 2nd in Bemidji. Our Posts across the 9th District have been putting in tremendous effort on membership. As of now, we're only 22 members away from hitting 100% District-wide. Nine Posts have already reached or exceeded 100%, and another nine are at 97% or higher. Pelican Rapids is leading the percentage race at more than 105%, with Warroad close behind at 104%. Bemidji currently leads in total members over 100% at seven, with Detroit Lakes right on their tail at six. Incredible work—thank you for your dedication.

With the March Meeting approaching, I'm also looking forward to nominations from Comrades ready to help lead the 9th District forward. If anyone has questions about stepping into a District role, please know this: you will be surrounded by Comrades who are supportive, experienced, and ready to help. I am deeply grateful for the commitment and encouragement our Posts and district team have shown throughout the year. You continue to prove why "9 is Fine."

Our Department Convention is coming up in June in Plymouth. I'm excited to once again have a 9th District Hospitality Room where we can gather, reconnect, and enjoy the camaraderie that makes our organization so strong. Thank you to everyone who helped make the Midwinter and Fall Conference hospitality rooms such warm and welcoming spaces.

I'll leave you with a little Airborne humor: Why is COVID-19 better than the 101st Airborne Division? Because COVID-19 is Airborne.

Looking forward to seeing all of you soon.

After all, it is basketball tournament time. Our program year is almost over. Our auxiliaries have been doing tremendous work in our communities. As a district, we still have two meetings coming up to talk about our successes and plans for the future. Scholarship and Youth contests are coming to a close. It brings joy and humility to a persons heart at the patriotism expressed in



Marlaina Hart, Auxiliary President Eighth District

Hello from District 8 Auxiliary! Well, we've had our little taste of spring and back to the deep freeze we go!

We thoroughly enjoyed our Mid Winter District 8 meeting, where we got to honor our District's Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy winner's.

Congratulations to our District Patriot's Pen winners:

1st Place- Grace Axtell sponsored by Post 1720 Grand Rapids

2nd Place- Lucia Steele sponsored by Post 1172 Eveleth

3rd Place- Ariah Reinhardt sponsored by Post 4456 Gilbert

Congratulations also to our District Voice of Democracy winners:

1st Place- Cole Painocich sponsored by Post 3979 Cloquet

2nd Place- Gracie Froemke sponsored by Post 2948 International Falls

3rd Place- Caleb Van Drunen sponsored by Post 1720 Grand Rapids

We had a hospital meeting before our regular Post and Auxiliary meeting with speakers from both the Silver Bay and Bemidji Veterans Homes.

We are now in the planning stages of our Loyalty Days to be held at Post 137 Duluth/Proctor in Proctor. The dates are May 1-2, 2026. New officers will be elected and installed for 2026-2027, at this meeting. We will also hold our joint Memorial services for all Comrades and Auxiliary members that passed in the last year.

All around the District we've been working to help our Veterans. We've held Christmas parties and dinners, made Valentines for our Veterans in Nursing Homes, assisted Living Facilities and of course Silver Bay Veterans Home. Our sewing groups have been busy with projects for our Veterans. We are gearing up to honor our Vietnam Veterans on March 29th Vietnam Veterans Day. Plans for programs and dinners are in progress. Also each Post and Auxiliary are planning events for this Memorial Day.

In closing I want to thank all members for their continued support of my Presidency these past 4 years. It was my honor to lead this group of awesome Patriots in our District. Please support your new officers as they begin their duties this June.

the artwork and essays of today's youth.

District 9's current membership count is at 97.6%. There are 5 Auxiliaries at or over 100% and another 5 within 1-2 new members of achieving 100%. I ask all VFW members to encourage immediate family members to join the VFW Auxiliary and participate in supporting the programs as they are able.

A HUGE Thank You to the Fergus Falls Veterans Home who recently held a Venison Dinner to thank the various veterans organizations for the support each one provides the

DIST. 1 AUX. - Cont. from Page 8

Every day, District 1 Auxiliary members were:

- Driving veterans to medical and other appointments
- Visiting veterans in our hospitals, care centers, and in their homes
- Supporting veteran programs
- Telling the story of the VFW Auxiliary at events and at any chance they get
- Sharing their talents of sewing, music, yardwork, etc. to support veterans and their families
- Supplying food and other resources to veteran families in need
- Supporting veteran family members who are caregivers for their veteran
- So So So SO much more!

In this District, we support one another, hold each other accountable focusing on our mission and not on petty jealousy, differences of opinion, or anything else that gets in the way of our purpose. Our 17 Auxiliaries are focused on the mission and combine our efforts and resources to ensure that our veterans and veteran families have whatever they need.

Every day I am grateful for these opportunities and the trust placed in me to be their President. I could not be more proud to be a member of the MN District 1 VFW Auxiliary!

DIST. 5 AUX. - Cont. from Page 9

be talking about our year end reports and District Auxiliary Elections.

Our Auxiliaries have begun planning Memorial Day festivities along with spring/summer events.

I know it is a couple months out, but I look forward to our convention on June 18 – 21st in Plymouth. It's when we have elections and see who our leaders are for 2026 – 2027, the goals for the coming year, and also when we see the year end results for 2025 – 2026.

Remember, the membership goal for every Auxiliary is 102%, so if you have someone interested in what you are doing in the community for Veterans, this is when you want to bring them to a meeting to get a snippet of what the VFW Auxiliary is all about.

The VFW is proud to say "no one does more for Veterans."

In closing, let no Veteran be forgotten.

Veterans and the Vets Home. The Auxiliaries in our District spend many hours with residents at activities like bingo, attending special events and performances and also providing donations to the canteen of clothes, puzzles, quilts, cards etc.

We are closely following the Legislative Priorities of the VFW and the hearings on Capitol Hill too. The message is clear - Honor the Contract. Veterans Day on the Hill is coming up April 23rd.

Thank you for your service to our country. It is a pleasure and honor to support our military.

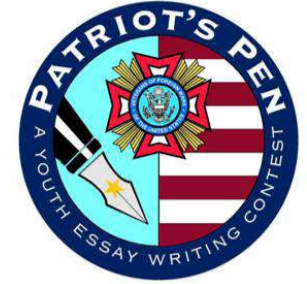
State Contest Winners



State Voice of Democracy Winner
Nandana Nambiar



State Patriot's Pen Winner
Levi Marthaler



K-5th Grade Teacher of the Year
Jim Condon



6th-8th Grade Teacher of the Year
Jennifer Floyd



9th-12th Grade Teacher of the Year
Jeff Granrud

AWARD SPONSORS

We would like to thank everyone that gave generously as sponsors. These valuable scholarships are being presented to recognize each student's and teacher's outstanding achievements in these national scholarship and recognition competition.

1st place..... \$300.00 Patriot's Pen Scholarship
Provided by the Department of Minnesota
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Auxiliary Scholarship Award
 Levi Marthaler

Sponsored by Cannon Falls VFW #4452 & Aux., Cannon Falls - 1st District

2nd place..... \$200.00 Patriot's Pen Scholarship
Provided by the Department of Minnesota
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Auxiliary Scholarship Award
 Scarlett Salakian

Sponsored by Brainerd VFW #1647 & Aux., Brainerd - 6th District

3rd place..... \$100.00 Patriot's Pen Scholarship
Provided by the Department of Minnesota
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Auxiliary Scholarship Award
 Molly Kobernusz

Sponsored by Roseau VFW Post #8663, Roseau - 9th District

K-5th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00
Provided by Charles R. Knaeble VFW Post 494, Crystal, MN
 Jim Condon, Edward Neil Elementary School, Burnsville, MN
Sponsored by Burnsville VFW Post #5833, Burnsville - 2nd District

6-8th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00
Provided by Keep-Zimmer VFW Post #1782, White Bear Lake, MN
 Jennifer Floyd, Most Holy Redeemer, Montgomery
Sponsored by Montgomery VFW Post #5340 & Aux., Montgomery - 2nd District

9-12th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00
Provided by Mankato VFW Post 950, Mankato, MN
 Jeff Granrud, Howard Lake Waverly Winsted High School
Sponsored by Lake Mary VFW Post #9232 & Aux., Howard Lake - 2nd District

"Special Thank You" to the following posts for donations towards students' and parents' hotel rooms and the banquet: VFW Post #1210 Hastings (\$5,000), VFW Post 906 Hutchinson (\$2,000), VFW Post 950 Mankato (\$900), VFW Post #1782 White Bear Lake (\$500). Thank you also goes to the Minnesota VFW Charitable Association and the MN VFW Auxiliary for their contributions toward the student awards.

Voice of Democracy Winners

1st place..... \$2,500.00 V.O.D. Scholarship
Provided by the Department of Minnesota
VFW Charitable Association (\$2,000)
and MN VFW Auxiliary (\$500)
 Nandana Nambiar

Sponsored by New Brighton VFW #724, New Brighton - 4th District

2nd place..... \$1,000.00 V.O.D. Scholarship
provided by Hugo Matejcek VFW Post #3723, Owatonna, MN
 Nadia Carlson

Sponsored by Fergus Falls VFW #612 & Aux., Fergus Falls - 9th District

3rd place..... \$600.00 V.O.D. Scholarship
Betty Ann Heuer Memorial Scholarship
provided by her loving husband Don Heuer
 Skye Ward

Sponsored by Isanti Rum River VFW #2735 & Aux., Isanti - 7th District

4th place..... \$500.00 V.O.D. Scholarship
Provided by Cannon Falls VFW Post #4452, Cannon Falls, MN
 Kierra Lease

Sponsored by Litchfield VFW #2818 & Aux., Litchfield - 6th District

Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)
Provided by Mankato VFW Post #950, Mankato, MN
 Gavin Ballard

Sponsored by Wilmont VFW #2603 & Aux., Wilmont - 3rd District

Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)
Provided by Mankato VFW Post #950, Mankato, MN
 Zane Beck

Sponsored by Cannon Falls VFW #4452 & Aux., Cannon Falls - 1st District

Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)
Provided by Prior Lake VFW Post #6208, Prior Lake, MN
 Annika Bessingpas

Sponsored by Hutchinson VFW #906 & Aux., Hutchinson - 2nd District

Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)
provided by Mankato VFW Post #950, Mankato, MN
 Cole Painovich

Sponsored by Cloquet VFW #3979 & Aux., Cloquet - 8th District

Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)
Provided by Mankato VFW Post #950, Mankato, MN
 Rachel Rankin

Sponsored by Starbuck VFW #4582 & Aux., Starbuck - 5th District

Legislative Report

By Barry Henriksen, Legislative Chairperson



The Department Officers had a very productive Washington DC Conference in the first week of March. Every year National selects one Department to receive the "National Legislative Service Award". We are honored to be this year's winner. Doc Tuorila and I certainly did not expect to win this prestigious award. We will not rest on our laurels.

In Washington DC we had 19 members of the VFW and Auxiliary in attendance. This is the most attendees we have had in quite some time. We were able to meet with all eight of our Representatives and both US Senators. We discussed the VFW National Legislative priorities and received favorable responses from the entire MN Congressional Delegation.

We were also extremely saddened to hear of the passing of MN Army Reservist MSG Nicole Amor. We observed a moment of silence during our meetings with Rep. McCollum, Rep. Morrison, and US Senator Amy Klobuchar.

For more information on the Conference see PDC David Staehlin's article in this edition of the Gopher Oversea'r. And for information on the legislation that we discussed in our meetings go to vfw.org and under "advocacy" click on **legislative priorities**.

On the State side the session is well underway. The top priority is the "Homestead market value for veterans with a disability". House File 3727 will increase the property tax exclusion for 100% disabled veterans from \$300k to \$450k. And 70-99% disable veterans from \$150k to \$425k. This bill has been passed in the House Veterans Committee, and moves to the Tax Committee. Hopefully by the time you read this we will have good news.

Veterans Hats on the Hill Day is Thursday April 23. I hope to see many of you at the rally. Remember there are now metal detectors at the Capitol. Please don't bring anything that will be confiscated. You will lose it, and you will slow down the process.

COMMANDER - Cont. from Page 1

Moines, IA along with attending the Big Ten Conference in Bettendorf, IA. I was honored to be the Keynote Speaker at Minneapolis Veteran's Home on Veterans Day. In February I attended the Boys and Girls Hockey Tournament in Moorehead. I encourage all to attend this great tournament. In March I attended the Washington D.C. Legislative Conference. I am looking forward to a very successful Department Convention in June.

There are many Veterans in Minnesota that do not know what

the VFW is all about. It is your job to find these Veterans, educate them about the VFW and encourage them to join. Ask everyone you meet if they are a Veteran. If they are, find out if they are eligible to join. If they are not eligible to join, ask them if they have relatives who served to see if they are eligible to join the VFW Auxiliary. Always have membership and eligibility forms with you for both organizations.

I will continue to be an active member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. If you need assistance or have questions, please contact me.

Minnesota VFW Riders

By Dan Jordan, Chairman Monticello Riders

Greetings,

The VFW Riders are getting into full swing. At time of print the Magnus Foundation Gala will be in the books and the silent auction generated \$830.00 donation to the VFW Aux Presidents Project.

The 8th Annual Blessing of the Bikes will be held on Saturday, May 10 at the Monticello VFW. Registration at 9am and program starting a 10am. There is a charge of \$15 per driver and \$5 per passenger.

The Gordy Kirk Memorial Ride will meet on June 19th at 8:15am at the Hamel VFW, 19020 Hamel Road, Plymouth. Kickstands up at 8:45am and ride to the VFW Convention at the Crowne Plaza arriving at 9:15am. Membership is not required



to participate in this ride..

The VFW Riders Summerfest Ride will be held on August 15 at the Monticello VFW.

For more information regarding the VFW Riders and their events, please contact Dan Jordan at 612-281-7371

"Death from Above" Northern Pike Fishing Contest

By Don Lohse, 6th District Commander

The Jenkins "Northern" Post 3839 held it's 1st Annual "Death From Above!" Pike Fishing Contest February 20-22, 2026. It was run to support of Folds of Honor Minnesota. Folds of Honor is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides educational scholarships to the spouses and children of military members who have fallen or been disabled while serving in the United States Armed Forces as well as America's first responders, including police, fire-fighters, EMTs and paramedics.

The contest was for the longest combined length of two Northern Pike, taken either by angling or spearing. The community came together in support of the contest and Folds of Honor with 50 businesses and individuals both local and from as far away as New York state signing on to sponsor the event. Contestants entered by purchasing a button that was custom designed for the event. Over 300 people registered to fish

with 75 contestants entering fish, competing for a pool of 50 prizes, including a portable fishing shelter, a custom pike spear from Hjelle Arc and a Garmin Livescope donated by 1 Layer Technologies. Pequot Tool next door to the Post made six very nice trophies. They were awarded to the contestants that registered the longest and shortest Pike in the Youth, Adult and Veteran categories.

The Post received an overwhelming amount of support in the form of sponsorships. Volunteers donated numerous hours to ensure the contest was successful. Everyone kept saying how much fun they were having and how they hoped it would be held next year. Area businesses had a fantastic weekend with the additional commerce when business is generally slow.

Post 3839 presented a check to Folds of Honor for over \$3000. The 2nd Annual "Death From Above!" Pike fishing contest will be held in February of 2027.

Convention Committee Report

By Scott Bill and the Convention Committee Team

Dear Comrades and Auxiliary Members,

As spring approaches it is time to think about our next get together, **Summer Convention Details**

- Dates: June 19-21, 2026
 - Location: Crowne Plaza, Plymouth, MN
 - Hotel Info & Banquet Tickets
- Hotel room details, banquet information, and the tentative schedule are available at on page 7 of this issue of the Oversea'r.

Looking Ahead- In an effort to allow our members greater visibility to our members, we are sharing the contracted schedule to assist with you planning.

- Conventions**
- 2026 - Crowne Plaza, Plymouth, June 18-21
 - 2027 - Crowne Plaza, Plymouth, June 17-20
 - 2028 - St. Cloud, June 22-25
- Fall Conference**
- 2026 - Willmar, Sept. 18-20
 - 2027 - Doubletree/Hilton, St. Louis Park, Sept. 17-18
 - 2028 - Doubletree/Hilton, Owatonna, Sept 15-17
 - 2030 - Big 10-Hilton, MSP Airport, Oct. 17-20
- Midwinter Conference**
- 2027 - Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park, Jan 22-24
 - 2028 - Marriott NW, Brooklyn Park, Jan 14-16

Phone: 1.833.839.8387
Online: VFWSTORE.ORG
Prices valid thru 8/31/26



NEW



NEW! STILL SERVING SILKIES
100% lightweight nylon tricot,
brief liner, inside key pocket.
7436 S-2XL \$22.95



NEW DESIGN! DAY OF SERVICE T-SHIRT 100% cotton, screen printed, unisex.
7292 S-3XL \$14.00
Starts shipping in April.

Veteran and Youth Activities

Moorhead Post 1223 Hosts 2026 VFW State Hockey

By Denny Bushy, VFW Hockey Chairman

The VFW State Invitational Tournament was held in Moorhead Jan 29 through Feb. 1st. It included 8 Bantam AA teams, 12 Bantam A teams and 6 15UA girls teams for a total of 26 VFW sponsored hockey teams.

The tournament kicked off with a banquet for the players on Thursday night with speakers and a question-and-answer session with former VFW players from past Moorhead teams. The VFW teams could relate to these High School players since they soon will play for their local high school. Also attending the banquet was our State Commander Ed Keogh and his wife. Ed sent a message to the players about having fun and enjoying the moment.

All of the games started Friday morning and went through Sunday afternoon.

At the Bantam A level the Thief River Falls team defeated Hastings for the championship.

A Teams	VFW sponsors
Elk River	5518
Moorhead	1223
Coon Rapids	9625
Austin	1216
Detroit Lakes	1676
Dodge County	1802
Fergus Falls	612
Forest Lake	4210
Hastings	1210
Minnesota River	1803
Thief River Falls	2793
Waseca	1642

At the Bantam AA level, Moorhead VFW 1223 defeated East Grand Forks in the championship game. Warroad defeated Rochester for 3rd place and Buffalo defeated Brainerd for the Consolation game.

AA Teams	VFW sponsors
Alexandria	936
Brainerd	1647
Buffalo	873
Elk River	5518
Moorhead	1223
Rochester	1215
East Grand Forks	un-sponsored
Warroad	un-sponsored



At the girls 15UA level, Hermantown-Proctor defeated Elk River to win the championship game and Moorhead defeated Andover for 3rd place.

15UA Teams	VFW sponsors
Brainerd	16447
Monticello	873
Elk River	5518
Moorhead	1223
Coon Rapids	9625
Proctor-Hermantown	137

In conclusion, Moorhead Youth Hockey did a great job of putting on this tournament and will be the host post again next year. Moorhead Post 1223 and Auxiliary had a table to promote membership and will do even more next year.

Thanks again to our State Commander Ed Keogh and his wife Aux. Vice President Jean Keogh for attending. I think Ed and Jean have become hockey fans.

Jim Hesselgrave missed his first VFW state tournament in over 20 years and was certainly missed. Thank you Jim for all your hard work and dedicated service to our youth and VFW programs.

We hope that veterans reading this will attend these youth activities in the future. It does so much for our youth seeing veterans supporting and being a fan at the games. See you all next year in Moorhead.



Hermantown-Proctor 2026 VFW State U15A Girls Invitational Hockey Tournament Champions sponsored by McConnell-Modeen Post 137

YOUTH UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Baseball
July 30 - August 2, 2026
MAC Sports Complex
Hosted by St. Cloud

Hockey
Boys A and AA, 2027
Hosted by Dilworth #1223

Girls U15A, 2027
Hosted by Dilworth #1223



Thief River Falls 2026 VFW State A Bantam Invitational Hockey Tournament Champions sponsored by Thief River Falls Post 2793



Moorhead 2026 VFW State AA Bantam Invitational Hockey Tournament Champions sponsored by Albert E. Johnson Post 1223

6th District Pistol Tournament

By Bryan Anderson, 6th District Quartermaster

For the second year in a row, Sauk Rapids VFW Post 6992 hosted a pistol tournament open to all VFW and Auxiliary members.

Last year Post 6992 ran it as the Department of MN VFW State Pistol Tournament. Based on new Department policies, each district is allowed to sponsor their own tournaments.

This then is the first year for the 6th District Pistol Tournament. The 6th District decided to allow not just VFW and Auxiliary members, but all currently serving, or Veterans

of the military to participate. This also served as a VFW membership drive.

The tournament was held on 14 March 2026 at The Firing Line in Sauk Rapids.

Following last year's rules, there were three shooting events:

- .380 and above iron sights
- .380 and above optics
- .22 caliber iron sights.
-

The weather forecast for the day caused slightly lower attendance

PISTOL - Cont. on Page 15

Commander's/President's Project 2025-2026

By Jim "Fatman" Dalziel, Project Coordinator

We are nearly at the finish line for this year's Commander's/Presidents Project.

The Minnesota Cottage at the National Veterans Home is in dire need of some interior work: new flooring, new window dressing, painting and duct cleaning. This building was built in 1934 and has served veterans and their families for 92 years.

In addition, funds that are raised will go to upgrade the Resident Convenience Store by purchasing much needed coolers, freezers and shelving.

You can support this outstanding project by;

1. Sending your and your posts donations directly to the National Home at

**VFW National Home
3573 S. Waverly Rd.
Eaton Rapids, MI 48827**

Earmarked **2025-2026 VFW Minnesota Commanders & Presidents Project**

2. Online at <https://vfwnationalhome.org/donate/>

a. enter Donation and Post/Individual

b. In Comments Section, enter "2025-2026 VFW Minnesota Commanders & Presidents Project"

Remember, no donation is too small. To that end, we have distributed a "National Home Bank" to each District and Cootie Pup Tent. We ask that you fill them with your loose change and dollars.

Also, if your post has gambling, we will accept a donation. Contact me at jamesdalziel@yahoo.com.



Becky Selleck, Auxiliary
President Second District

Greetings from District Two, As we enter the final months of our program year, I would like to share my appreciation for the dedication and service demonstrated by Auxiliaries across our district. Our members continue to make a meaningful impact by supporting veterans, their families, and our communities.

Membership remains a key focus as we close out the year. District Two Auxiliaries are continuing to make that final push- reaching out, inviting, and engaging potential members. Our strength lies in our numbers, and every new or reinstated member helps ensure we can carry our mission forward.

This is also an important time for completing and submitting year-end reports. These reports reflect the work being done at the Auxiliary level and help tell the story of our organization's impact. From hours volunteered to funds raised and lives touched, these efforts truly demonstrate our collective strength.

District Two will hold its District Convention on April 25 in Prior Lake. We look forward to gathering to conduct business, elect new leadership, and celebrate the accomplishments of our Auxiliaries.

As we close out the year, let's continue our efforts in membership and community service, with participation in events such as Veterans Day on the Hill, Loyalty Day, the VFW Day of Service, and Memorial Day observances.

It has been an honor to serve as District Two President and to represent the incredible work being done across our district.

DIST. 4 AUX. - Cont. from Page 8

an awards banquet to recognize students, teachers, firefighters, policemen, and others for their outstanding accomplishments.

Auxiliary 6690 brought Valentine's Day cards to the Minneapolis VA. They also donated calendars to the VA and the Minneapolis and Hastings Veterans Homes.

Auxiliary 1782 had a 2.2 mile walk on February 22 at 2:22 p.m. in recognition of the 22 veterans who die by suicide every day. It was also a fundraiser for Believet.

Auxiliary 7555 will be having a pancake breakfast. The funds raised will be donated to multiple veteran organizations such as Believet, Honor Flight, and Fisher House Foundation. They will also be hosting an Easter party for kids in March. The USVRC (US Vets Riding Club) is a charity organization committed to helping Veterans, their families, and the community. They meet monthly at the Post.

A group of representatives from the District also meet as a sewing group on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month to create articles of support for veterans.

Overall, I am very pleased with and proud of the work being done by the auxiliaries in District 4.



Cootie Korner

By Jarrod McReynolds

Commander of the Grand of MN



Greetings Cooties of the Grand of Minnesota and Comrades of the Department of Minnesota,

I hope this message finds each of you doing well and continuing the important work that defines our Order. The strength of the Grand of Minnesota has always been the dedication of our members—Cooties who quietly go about doing the work that truly matters: supporting our hospitalized veterans and living out our motto, "Keep 'em Smilin' in Beds of White."

These last few months has reminded us both why our mission matters and how strong the bond of our organization truly is.

On February 15th, Cooties across the country participated in Supreme Visit Day, joining together in the spirit of service to our veterans. Here in Minnesota, members of the Grand gathered at the St. Cloud VA Health Care System to visit with veterans receiving care there. It was a meaningful opportunity to spend time with those who have served our nation and to remind them that they are not forgotten.

Moments like that capture the true purpose of the Military Order of the Cootie. Our visits may seem small, but to a veteran spending time in a hospital bed, a friendly conversation, a handshake, or simply the presence of fellow veterans can make a world of difference. I want to thank every Minnesota Cootie who took the time to participate and represent our Grand so well.

Sadly, January 19th also

brought difficult news for our Order. Early in the month we lost Eric Bell, our Supreme Commander. His passing was a loss felt across the entire organization. Supreme Commander Bell served the Order with dedication and pride, and he worked tirelessly to support the mission of the Cooties and the veterans we serve.

We extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and to Cooties everywhere who had the privilege of serving alongside him. His leadership and commitment to the Order will not be forgotten.

In times like this, we are reminded that the strength of the Cootie organization lies not just in our traditions, but in the fellowship, we share with one another and the mission that unites us. The best way we can honor those who have served before us—including leaders like Supreme Commander Bell—is to continue the work.

I encourage each Pup Tent and each member to remain active, stay engaged, and continue looking for ways to support the veterans in our hospitals and care facilities. The work we do matters, and every effort helps keep our Order strong.

The Grand Convention will be held this May 16th at Hopkins Post 425. I hope to see every Cootie possible at our convention.

Thank you for everything you do for the veterans we serve and for the Grand of Minnesota.

Continue to do the lousy work you do,

Veterans Day on the Hill

Wednesday, April 12, 2025
St. Paul Nat'l Guard Armory,
Cedar and Armory Streets

MN VFW Charitable Association

By Ken Schroeffer, Association President

The 2027 Raffle Calendars have arrived. The pre-order form is available in the latest Department General Orders. Please order in multiples of 25 calendars. When filling out the pre-order form, specify whether you want to pick calendars at the Convention or when you can pick them up. If you want calendars before the convention, we need to know that so we can get them to you sooner.

Calendars **CAN NOT** be shipped out through the USPS. They can be

delivered through FEDEX or UPS. To deliver them, we need a valid street address NOT a PO Box.

The next regular meeting of the Charitable Association will be held at the State Convention on Thursday June 18 at 2:30pm in the Conference Room E. This meeting is open to all members of the MN VFW. There will be two three-year Director positions that need to be filled. They are open to any member of the VFW in good standing. For more information or to apply, contact Ken Schroeffer at handiman47@hotmail.com.



**Veterans
Crisis Line**
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

Timely Tidbits

98 Year old Trivia Wizard

By Ken Schroepfer, Editor Gopher Oversea'r

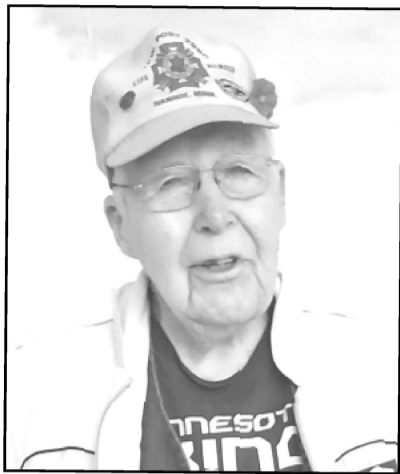
Roger W. Nelson entered the world on August 22, 1928 at the Hendricks Hospital with the help of a mid-wife. One of his two sisters died at a very young age. This left Roger and his remaining sister to help with chores on the family farm in the Hendricks area.

The family farm consisted of a handful of dairy and beef cattle on 180 acres of land. As the need arose, his dad rented additional farm land for crops.

Uncle Sam came a calling on July 30, 1951 when Roger was drafted into the Army for a period of 2 years. He was off to basic training at Camp Gordon (Ft. Gordon), Georgia. As luck would have it, his advanced training as a telephone installer and repair person was also held at Camp Gordon. After all of the training, his first duty station was with the 3rd Army stationed at – Camp Gordon. So far, Roger had spent half of his duty time stateside. Finally, he received his overseas duty assignment with the 596th Signal Support in Germany.

On his discharge from the Army, Roger returned to help his parents on the family farm. When his dad wanted to retire from farming, Roger bought the family farm. Through hard work, he expanded the farm to a total of 280 acres.

In 1965, at the age of 37, Roger met and married Evangeline, a loving widow with two children. Together, they were not able to have any children. However, that did not keep Roger from raising Evangeline's children as his own. The boy died at a young age. The daughter grew up, got married and currently lives in Eau Claire, WI. His dear wife passed away on September 9, 2014.



Roger continued to farm the 280 acres and provide custom farm services to other farmer in the area.

As in farming, Roger was an active member of Ivanhoe VFW Post 2980. He served for over 20 years as Post Adjutant and was convinced to serve one year as Post Commander. If there was an event being held at the Post, he could be found washing the pots and pans and running the dishwasher.

His finally retirement from farming in 2024. It was a hard decision to make. Evangeline's daughter has helped him make the transition to the assisted living care unit at Lincoln Lane Villa in Hendricks, MN. She checks up on him quite regularly.

Roger along with fellow VFW Post 2980 member Elmer Koopman were scheduled to take the Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. in May, 2025. Due to a heart problem, Roger missed the May flight but caught the October flight. He said he really enjoyed the trip.

Roger totally enjoys and is involved in life at his new home. His charming personality and clear mind make him the favorite when playing trivia games.

After all, he IS the Trivia Wizard !!

Once a Farmer, Always ...

By Ken Schroepfer, Editor Gopher Oversea'r

Elmer Koopman was born January 13, 1932 on the family farm outside of Ivanhoe, MN. He and his two sisters were busy helping with chores on the farm when they weren't in school.

After graduating from high school, he spent the next couple of years helping his dad run the 360 acre family farm.

As fate would have it, Elmer received his Korean War draft notice in the mailbox. He immediately made a trip to town and enlisted in the Air Force on April 24, 1953.

There was eight weeks of basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas followed with six months of aircraft mechanics school at Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, Texas. After that, Elmer was sent to three months of propeller school at Chanute AFB in Rantoul, IL.

Upon graduating, Elmer was assigned to the 28th Field Maintenance Squadron, 28th Bombardment Wing at Ellsworth AFB, Rapid City, SD. He served as a B-36 bomber mechanic specializing in propeller maintenance. It was during his over two years at Ellsworth AFB that Elmer was sent on TDY to Anderson AFB, Guam for four months as part of a 30 plane squadron rotation.

While stationed at Ellsworth AFB, Elmer went visiting with relatives on Thanksgiving and met the love of his life (Twila) and her parents. Christmas eve, 1954, he took the big step and proposed to Twila. It was their shared love of dancing that helped cement the relationship. The two were married March 12, 1955. A year later, Staff Sergeant Elmer Koopman was discharged.

Just as many other young men did after they served their country,



Elmer came back home to Ivanhoe and went back to farming the land. He continued as a dairy farmer for 40 years milking as many as 30 head of cattle.

In the 71 years since that first meeting, he and Twila have run a dairy farm, raised three children (a boy and 2 girls), and done so much more. In addition to working, Elmer found time to volunteer at the Ivanhoe VFW Post 2980, Bethany Elim Lutheran Church AND serve hot dogs during the local Polish Days celebrations.

After they retired from farming, Elmer and Twila traveled, spent time with the grand children and great-grandchildren.

Elmer has been a Life Member of VFW Post 2980 since 1987.

Elmer along with fellow VFW Post 2980 member Roger Nelson were scheduled to take the Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. in May, 2025. However, Elmer missed the May flight because of a heart problem discovered while waiting to board the plane. After a triple-way bypass, he was cleared for the October, 2025 flight.

Elmer and Twila still live on the farm outside of Ivanhoe.

PISTOL - Cont. from Page 13

than what was expected. There were however, still 26 shooters, many competing in multiple events, that attended from around the state of Minnesota, as well as 4 from Wisconsin.

After shooters completed their events, they met back at Post 6992 for awards and door prizes. Large trophies were given to 1st place shooters in each event, as well as medals to 2nd and 3rd. Each shooter also received an event t-shirt, drink tickets for the club, as well as a ticket for one of many door prizes including signed sports memorabilia, and \$300 in various gift cards.

Membership applications were given out to 2 eligible veterans.

Winners for each event are as follows:

.380 and Above- Open

1st Place- Dan Holmes
2nd Place- Gary Braaten
3rd Place- John Pietruszewski

.22 Open

1st Place- Chris Trebelhorn
2nd Place- Jason Janecek
3rd Place- Gary Janecek

.380 and Above-Optics

1st Place- Larry Weidel
2nd Place- Jason Janecek
3rd Place- Gary Janecek

We look forward to seeing more entrants next year.

★★ WANTED ★★

Photos, captions and articles honoring our Senior Veterans

The Gopher Oversea'r will include articles honoring the contributions of our Senior Veterans (90+) 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, attn. Oversea'r Editor or by email to Oversear@vfwmn.us

Photos will be returned upon request.



THE WALL THAT HEALS

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL REPLICA & MOBILE EDUCATION CENTER

★

A PROGRAM OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND
FOUNDERS OF THE WALL

Polar Lakes Park | **Opens Thursday, Aug 9**
1280 Hammond Rd. | **Closes Sunday, Aug 12 - 2:00 pm**
White Bear Township | **OPEN 24 HOURS - Free to the public**

Information: whitebearhistory.org/the-wall-that-heals-wbt-2026










Thank You for Your Service!

Serving the recreational needs of disabled and able-bodied Veterans, Active-Duty Military, Family and Friends, as well as the general public.

- 1, 2, 3, and 5-bedroom cabins, RV sites
- Lodge with Dining Hall, Kitchen, Conference Room, Gift Shop
- Handicap Accessible Pontoons, Fishing Boats, Golf Carts
- Fully Accessible Fishing Pier, Sauna, Walking Trail and more.

www.veteransonthelakeresort.org
 Email: veteransonthelakeresort@gmail.com
 Phone: 218-365-6900 Address: 161 Fernberg Rd, Ely, MN 55731


MINNESOTA VFW CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION




EXCLUSIVE MUSEUM PREVIEW FOR VFW MEMBERS
 Thursday, June 25 | 7:00-8:00 p.m.
 Learn about the new museum and how you can be a part of history.
Opening Late Summer 2026
 Register now: mnvetmuseum.org/vfw or scan QR code

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

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

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Earmark for one of the following: ___ Where needed most

___ VFW Outdoor Fund ___ Veterans in Need ___ VFW Programs

Poppy Days 2026

Last Call - Order Now!!
 Poppy days are:
May 15-16, 2026
 Is your Post ready?
 Are You Ready?





your link to experts

minnesotaveteran.org | **1-888-LinkVet**
 (546-5838)

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:

- * 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

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.

The MN VFW Charitable Association 2027 Raffle Calendar is Now Available



This year's calendar features photos of the VA Hospitals and Minnesota Veterans Homes that provide health care to veterans located throughout Minnesota.

They sell for only \$20 each and your Post or Auxiliary will receive \$5 back for each Calendar sold...

Posts can order their 2027 Calendars now Email: info@mnavfca.org or Call the VFW Office at 612-291-1757

Individual purchases can be made a from participating VFW Post.