

GOPHER OVERSEAS'R

Volume 79, NO. 2

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

October 2025 - January 2026

Carol Hanson
Past Dept. Aux. President
1996-1997



Carol Hanson passed away: October 10, 2025.

She was elected State President in Duluth, Minnesota, June 29, 1966. Carol was a member of Walter Strand Auxiliary #950 and later transferred to Mahlum-Hanson Auxiliary #1647.

During her term in office, Carol attended the National Convention in Louisville KY, and the Legislative Day at the State Veterans Service Building.

Carol attended the National Mid-Year Conference in Honolulu HI and was honored with a night on the town with National President Eileen Tanner and the other State Presidents.

Midwinter Conference January 16-18, 2026

By Cheryl Burton, Department Office Manager

The Department of Minnesota's Annual Midwinter Conference has something exciting for everyone! If you've never attended before, this is the year to join us whether you're planning to stay for the entire weekend or just stop by on Saturday.

The event will be held Friday, January 16 through Sunday, January 18, 2026. The Marriott NW in Brooklyn Park has free parking. If you have not purchased your banquet ticket or reserved your room, please do this at your earliest convenience as time is going by quickly and the Conference will be here before you know it. We will have four \$50 Raffle drawings during the Banquet, please fill out your raffle ticket when you register at the Northland Foyer for both VFW and Auxiliary. You must be present to win.

During the Conference, the VFW will welcome National Adjutant General, Dan West and the Auxiliary's National Representative as well.

Two joint seminars will be presented on Saturday, January 17:

- Suicide Prevention Class led by Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Shawn Alderman, U.S. Army, MD.
- "Burial at Ft. Snelling: It's Not Automatic for Veterans" presented by Shane Buldra from Dignity Memorial/Sunset Cemetery. Shane will provide an overview of the necessary steps Veterans must take to establish eligibility and make advance arrangements for burial at Fort Snelling National Cemetery.

Both seminars will be held in the Northland Ballroom.

For the VFW, National Adjutant General Dan West will be presenting on "Members' Rights" in the Minnesota Ballroom.

While the Midwinter Conference offers many special events and opportunities to connect, it's also a time to stay focused on the important business of our organization. Throughout the weekend, a variety of committee and program meetings will be held to support our ongoing

Midwinter - 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 moving at a rapid pace. I am truly enjoying being your State Commander. I hope that my assistance at the Post and District level and have helped those that requested advice and direction. Please reach out to me if you need anything, we are all in this together.

Keeping our membership growing is an essential part of the VFW. Please continue to recruit, retain and expand your membership in your Posts. Our Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitomore's membership goal is 101%. Now is the time to work on reaching that goal. Please don't wait until the last minute to increase your membership. Potential members are out there; you just need to find them. Ask everyone you meet if they served in the military. If they're eligible, sign them up right away. Also, remember to recruit for the VFW Auxiliary.

I would like to remind you every Post must have representation at District meetings. By attending, you and your members stay up to date on important news about National, State, and District programs, events, and legislation. It's also a great way to build friendships and enjoy time with fellow members.

COMMANDER - Cont. on Page 10

Normandy Legacy Flight

By Ken Schroepfer, editor



All veteran honorees, whether they can walk unassisted or not, are assigned a wheelchair and an assistant so that they do not overtax themselves

Normandy - Cont. on Page 6

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Save The Date!!

VFW State Hockey Tournaments

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and Girls U15A

Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2026

Moorhead, MN

National Washington Conference

March 1-5, 2026

Washington, DC

State Convention

June 19-21, 2026

Crowne Plaza

Plymouth, MN

Minnesota Veterans Day on the Hill

(Day TBD), 2026

St. Paul, MN

National Convention

July 25-29, 2026

Reno, NV

Upcoming VFW Events

Red Events are Department Events

Top News

VFW Nat'l Manual of Procedure, Section 803

Alternative Cap

Comrades,

At the request and direction of Commander-in-Chief Whitmore, I'm sending this to all Department Commanders to clarify a recent change to Section 803 of the National Manual of Procedure, adopted by the National Convention.

A new paragraph titled "Alternative Cap" now allows members, other than officers, to wear a baseball-style cap during meetings of the Post and District.

Here's a quick summary of what that means:

- The cap must be the official cap, sold through the VFW Store, with VFW initials, Post numerals, state, rank of office (if applicable), "Veterans of Foreign Wars," and the Cross of Malta.
- Lettering must be gold, and the trim on the bill may be gold, green, red, or silver—matching the braid colors used for each level of the organization.
- This is an alternative, not a replacement, for the standard overseas cap.
- It cannot be worn at formal ceremonies, in business attire, or at any event where the regulation cap is prescribed.
- For Districts, "meetings" includes both regular business meetings and District conventions.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can officers wear the baseball-style cap?

No. Officers must continue to wear the regulation overseas cap when performing their duties or representing the organization in an official capacity.

Does this apply at Department or National meetings?

No. The alternative cap applies only to Post and District meetings, including District conventions.

Can the alternative cap be worn at a Post social event or casual gathering?

Yes, provided it's an informal setting where uniform caps are not otherwise required. The alternative cap should not be worn if the event is ceremonial, public-facing, or requires business attire.

Am I required to have my Post number, Department, or position on the cap?

No. Members may purchase a plain black cap that features only the Cross of Malta on the front and uses the appropriate bill color for their level: gold for Post, green for District, red for Department, or silver for National, based on their position.

Can a Post or District design its own version or use a different color?

No. The design, lettering, and color requirements in Section 803 must be followed exactly. Any deviations would make the cap non-regulation.

Can both caps be worn interchangeably?

Members may choose to wear either the regulation overseas cap or the alternative cap during casual meetings at the Post or District level. The overseas cap remains the standard for all formal and official functions.

What about members who hold dual roles (for example, Post officer and District member)?

When acting in an officer capacity, at any level, the member must wear the regulation overseas cap. When attending as a general member, the alternative cap may be worn if appropriate for that setting.

Can life members, All-State, or All-American honorees wear the baseball-style cap with their color designations?

No. Those color distinctions apply only to the regulation overseas cap. The alternative cap must remain black with gold lettering.

They are available from the VFW Store starting December for a cost of \$40.

If you have any questions, please reach out to me directly.

Joshua Schreck
National Parliamentarian
Judge Advocate General (2024-2025)
Phone: 716.364.2780
VFW Parliamentary Procedures and Learning

ordering info
on page 15 of
the Oversea'r

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Mary Thompson, Jr. Vice Cmdr.; Todd Roberts, Judge Advocate,
Ken Schroepfer, editor

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

MN VFW Members Receive National Appointments

CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER!

Every year, each Department Commander has the option to recommend to the VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore members of the MN VFW for consideration to National VFW Appointments for the year 2025-2026.

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

National Deputy Chief of Staff

Charles Dresen, Post 6208
Gary Klemetson, Post 2793
Theodore Mavencamp, Post 7664
Cathy Osterbauer, Post 8731
Kenneth Schroepfer, Post 7

National Aide-de-Camp

Russell Bentley, Post 1221
Jake Berndt, Post 8144
Jonathon Brandtner, 2854
Leah Brandtner, Post 2854
Howard Christman, Post 1720
Gary Dahl, Post 3979
David David, Post 4258
Lynette Dornbusch, Post 612
Rick Godfrey, Post 494
Scott Jonson, Post 2948
Timothy Kent, Post 2735
Joshua Kojetin, Post 1260
Gretchen Larsen, Post 3044
Michael Lavoie, Post 2962
Richard Leciejewski, Post 1757
Rachel Maloney, Post 6208
Melisssa Medbery, Post 9073
Erik Monson, Post 5518
Corky Olson, Post 6316
Jody Ruotsalainen, Post 137
Jennifer Warren, Post 3869
Robert Wiltse, Post 6587

National Assistant Inspector General

Bryan Anderson, Post 6992
Jake Berndt, Post 8144
Jerrold Brletich, Post 9625
Lawrence Grindland, Post 1210
Bruce Malterud, Post 1260
Ronald Widell, Post 8731

National Special Aide-de-Camp

James Athmann, Post 7050
Kelly Booge, Post 1260
James Chamber, Post 9433
Maria Maldonado, Post 1791
Nathan Morgan, Post 9625

Merry Christmas

from the Staff of the
Gopher Oversea'r



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

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

Please Note the below address change: (Please Print)

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2025-2026 Department Officers

Senior Vice Commander

Charles Hawkins Sr.



Greeting Comrades

Now that the weather is starting to change, it's time to get the warm clothing out of storage. With the weather comes the Holidays and that WHITE STUFF! If you have to be someplace, make sure that you leave early so you are not rushing!

Everyone has been doing a lot of traveling going to different meetings all over the state. When we have District Meetings most of us all have to do some traveling.

Midwinter will be coming up in January, so start making your plans. Get your hotel room reserved and your banquet tickets ordered. If your post orders, you can all sit together, 8 tickets per table! And let us not forget about our auxiliary members. You know when you are a member you have a lot of others that can also be members.

The membership goal this year is 101 percent. The end of last year was absolutely outstanding. I hope everyone is working hard to get the state back up to that 101 percent!

Remember, not only post and auxiliary members can sign up people for our great organization, but we can have help from the club manager and our post employees. They may not be a post member, but they can still place their name on the application.

As the time and weather are a changing, let us not forget about the brothers and sisters that can't get out as often as they like! Give them a call to find out what they may need: groceries, personal needs, doctor appointments or snow removal!

Have a safe Holiday Season and see you all at the Midwinter Conference.

Adjutant/Quartermaster

Barry Henriksen



Thank you to all the posts and districts that have sponsored our conferences with ads for our books. The book looks great! Cheryl has done an amazing job helping posts with their ads and putting the book together. The color really makes the ads pop. I have had many members comment on how great it looks. If you haven't done an ad yet, please talk to your post about doing one for the State Convention, and for all three events next year. The same goes for the districts that have yet to sponsor an ad.

Midwinter marks the halfway point of the VFW year. I have enjoyed getting out of the office and visiting posts throughout the state. From Redwood Falls to Little Falls, and Duluth to Mankato it has been fun attending post meetings and hearing about all the great things our posts are doing. The community impact is extremely impressive. Please make sure that your post is reporting all your community service events and donations. Before the Dashboard Minnesota was always a top five state in community service. Now that everything is on the dashboard, we are around 20th place in community service. I don't believe that we are doing less, we are just not reporting it. Please report all community service on the Dashboard. When I am at the State Capitol or Washington DC, I need to be able to tell politicians how much of an impact the VFW has in their districts.

By now you should have a lot of green on your post dashboard. Quarterly community service reports will keep you green. You need to have done at least one report from

July-September, and one report from October-December, and so forth. But, once again, don't just do one report, report all your community service. Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy need to be reported prior to January 31. I will reach out to every district to make sure that every post that advances students to the district competition gets credit on the dashboard. Please report how many students participated, how many advanced to the district, and how much money in prizes and other costs you had. Poppies should already be purchased, or please order soon. And membership should be tracking toward the goal of 101%. And don't stop at 101%. The higher you go on membership the more points you get toward All State, and you get more awards for All American if you finish in the top 15 of your division.

I am seeing a lot of problems with audits. Many posts do not show a balance in their Relief Fund. Maintaining a Relief Fund is required by the National Bylaws and must be reported on your quarterly audit. Your audit must also balance. The top portion is what your bank account balance shows. The reconciliation on the bottom is your checkbook balance plus outstanding checks. These two totals need to balance. Also, make sure you are reporting all your accounts on both top and bottom to balance the totals. You also need at least two trustees and the commander's signature on the audit. And please make sure you are properly bonded. Many posts are not bonded for nearly enough. Don't find out the hard way that you were under bonded.

Junior Vice Commander

Mary Thompson



Greetings, Comrades,

It's hard to believe we're already halfway through the VFW year! Time flies when we're busy serving veterans, strengthening our Posts, and showing our communities what the VFW is all about. The mid-year mark gives us a chance to refocus on why we do what we do. Every program we run, every fundraiser we hold, every voice we raise in advocacy — they all connect back to one simple truth: we serve to make life better for veterans and their families.

Our next big gathering will be the Midwinter Conference, January 16-18 at the Marriott NW in Brooklyn Park. It's always a highlight — a time to connect, share ideas, and recharge our batteries for the months ahead.

As we look back on the first half of the year, there's already a lot to be proud of. Programs like the Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen, and Teacher of the Year have wrapped up their submissions — and I hope

each Post took part. These programs don't just honor deserving students and educators; they also remind our communities that patriotism and civic pride are still alive and well.

Our Safety Program - it's one of the simplest and most meaningful ways we can give back — by recognizing the firefighters, police officers, EMTs, and even school bus drivers who quietly go above and beyond every day. They serve our hometowns with the same spirit we served our country.

Each of these programs connects us to the people we serve and helps tell the story of who we are. They open doors, spark conversations, and build trust — and sometimes, those conversations lead to new members.

This is the stretch where commitment counts most — when we dig in, stay connected, and keep the momentum going. Thank you all for your continued service and your commitment to our mission.

Judge Advocate

Todd Roberts



I am very humbled by the support I have received from around the state with this new adventure of being your Department Judge Advocate. Over the past several months while traveling the state and beyond, I have been able to see so many friends that I have made through the VFW and making new ones along the way.

Recently I was able to attend the Commander-in-Chief's homecoming in Des Moines, Iowa, the Big 10 Conference in Bettendorf, Iowa, where I learned so much more about the VFW. It was truly an honor to represent Minnesota at these events.

I am truly looking forward to seeing many of you at our Midwinter Conference where we will be celebrating our youth and teachers for the VOD/PP and TOY. This is such a great way to show our communities how we care so much about our youth and the people that help shape our youth. Hope you will join us at the banquet.

As we move forward, I encourage everyone to remain engaged and proactive in both our organizational efforts and community involvement.

Together, our collective actions ensure the ongoing success of our programs and the strength of our membership. Please reach out with any questions or suggestions—your input is invaluable as we strive to improve and grow.

Now for a bit of the business side. Now is the time for you to submit any bylaw changes to our Department Bylaws. They must be submitted so the Bylaw Committee can look at them and make sure they are done properly. Also, I would like to congratulate all the Posts that have exceeded the 100% membership already. Do not hold back on getting those annual members to pay their dues or upgrade to life membership.

I am grateful for the warm welcomes and thoughtful conversations I've shared with members across our great state. These interactions have deepened my appreciation for the dedication and camaraderie that define our VFW community. Each journey and event has reinforced my commitment to serving you as Department Judge Advocate.

We have the honor of having National Adjutant General Dan West as our National Representative at Midwinter. He will be giving a class on members' rights on Saturday morning before lunch. Let's pack the room for his class, and the banquet on Saturday night. The Midwinter Banquet is our signature event of the

year. These fine students are great examples of the youth of our country. I can't wait to hear the winning speeches for Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy!

Thank you for all you do!

Minnesota Auxiliary News



STATE PRESIDENT VFW Auxiliary

Julie Stoehr

Member of
VFW Post 1757 Auxiliary
Cook, MN



Greetings VFW and Auxiliary Members.

It has been a busy five months. My travels started with the National President visiting here in August. We showed her the sites of Glensheen in Duluth, Split Rock Light House and then to Silver Bay Veterans Home and lunch with the Veterans. Then back to Proctor VFW Post #137 and a marvelous supper prepared by Commander Allen Young and crew, which consisted of both Post and Auxiliary members! They did an excellent job!

I have made my official visits to District 9, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 4. Also attended two membership dinners, Coon Rapids and North St. Paul. Fun times, great food.

Plans are now being made to visit the Hospitals and Homes. It will be wonderful to visit our Veterans and those that care for them!

Fall Conference was well attended, and excellent training was held. We were fortunate to have our own Sonia Tatge National Council Member Area E as our National Representative! New things were tried, and I heard more positive than negative. We must not remain "back when, this is what we did," things are very different now and to attract new members we must be willing to try different things. It never hurts to try, but it does hurt to not try new ideas to move forward for growth and in strengthening our VFW Auxiliaries.

Veterans Day, every day is Veterans Appreciation Day! I was honored to attend the St. Cloud VA Health Care Veterans Day Celebration; beautiful service and music. What made my heart feel good was there was a Purple Heart Presentation made to Specialist (Retired) Clyde Christian, his father presented his pin and placed it on his uniform. This is what it is about; not speeches, fanfare, etc., it is about the Veterans and family and honoring what they have done, and to pick Veterans Day for the presentation, I was so very honored to be there to see this. Then on to Browerville VFW 8391 for the ceremony with lighting the luminaries, very touching and heartfelt, honoring the Veterans and deceased Veterans of all wars and conflicts. A total of 1,510 Luminaries were lit after the ceremony by Veterans, families,

and community members. Thank you Sue Wiersgalla and members of 8391. Thank you to all who support our Veterans and families.

January 2026 brings Midwinter Conference at the Marriott Northwest, Brooklyn Park, January 16th – 18th. The Department of MN VFW Auxiliary is honored to have our new National Guard Cynthia Davis for our National Representative. It will be great to see everyone again, seeing old friends and making new friends. We all look forward to the Poppy Contest as we have so many talented and creative members in Minnesota. WHO will be going to National this year? The last two years MN has done well, with a 1st Place and a 2nd Place entry coming from Browerville in District 6!

Friday evening at 6 pm the Department Auxiliary Council of Administration meets for the business meeting. At this meeting we will be having a parade of checks for the Hospital Green Shower and for the Presidents Project, MAGNUS Veterans Foundation located at Dayton, MN. Please be generous.

Saturday starts off at 9 am, with more training and then at 9:30 am there will be a seminar on *Suicide Awareness and Prevention* presented by Retired LT. Colonel Dr. Shawn Alderman, a Special Forces MD and the CEO of the Magnus Veterans Foundation, the VFW is invited to attend.

Laurie Dale will be giving an informational seminar on our new membership applications and processing that all will be required to start using January 1, 2026. Please plan to attend!

During Saturday we will be recognizing the District and Auxiliary Presidents. Saturday evening is the Midwinter Conference Banquet, which we all look forward to. The talented winners from each of the 9 Districts join us for the big announcement of the top Voice of Democracy Winner! Who will be the one? We are also happy to celebrate the Department Winner of the Patriots Pen Contest. An exciting evening for sure!

Thank you for all you do and continue to do for our Veterans and Families!

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.

National District Council

By Sonia Tatge, Member Area E

At Fall Conference in September, information was presented on a possible Legacy Life Membership for Auxiliary members. Some feedback has come back to me but more information seems to be needed so I would like to share what I know with you.

The National VFW Auxiliary would like to provide Legacy Life Memberships similar to what the VFW currently offers. As your National District Council Member, I need some feedback to take to the National Council Meeting being held at the National Mid-Year Conference in February 2026.

Legacy Life Memberships would be a Life Membership that recognizes a members' significant investment in the VFW Auxiliary, and it would reward the Auxiliary of a Legacy Life Member for that investment.

There are 3 levels of Legacy Life Member available---Bronze, Silver, and Gold. The cost for each level would be \$400, \$800, and \$1200 respectively. A present member would purchase this and

their Auxiliary would then receive payments back for a period of twenty (20) years after their death. Payments would be \$6, \$12, and \$18 depending on the level purchased by the member originally.

You must be a Life Member of the VFW Auxiliary first before you can upgrade to a Legacy Life Membership.

Payment options and some personal items would be awarded to the member upon purchase, also. There are other details for this program to be considered and the National VFW Auxiliary continues to work on those.

If you would like to comment on this program or have other questions, please feel free to email me at statge@frontiernet.net. All responses will be presented to the National Council at our February meeting. Please send them to me by February 1, 2026, so I can share your thoughts and concerns. Let me be your voice on the National level. I am honored to be your NDCM Area E representative from Minnesota.

Treasurer/Secretary Chair

By Laurie Dale, Treasurer/Secretary MN VFW Auxiliary

New VFW Auxiliary Membership Application Coming Soon

1. Only the new VFW Auxiliary Membership Transfer Application with the notation of "Revised – January 2026" in the bottom right corner will be accepted after January 1, 2026. All other applications should be thrown out or destroyed. If old applications are sent to the office, they will be returned to the local auxiliary.
2. ACH payments will no longer be accepted – it was felt if they could provide the voided check to do an ACH, they could just write the check to the VFW Auxiliary for processing.
3. No credit card information will appear on the Membership Application anymore. There will be a box to check if they are using a credit card. Once the Membership Application has been processed in MALTA by Department, a message (email or text) will be generated and sent to the person who is responsible for payment (credit card holder). This person will have thirty (30) days to respond to the request for payment. If their payment is not provided within that time limit, their application will be void.
4. During the time between the application being entered into MALTA and the credit card

payment clearing, the applicant will be a "Provisional" Member. Reports on these pending members will be available to Treasurers in MALTA so that you can track progress.

5. The Recruited by section also has been updated and eventually when the National VFW gets their new computer system up and running, we will be able to enter their VFW ID Member Numbers on our end because MALTA and the new VFW "Command Post" system (VFW MALTA) will be compatible.

6. There will also be the ability to upload a copy of the Membership Applications to the individual MALTA accounts for each member. These must be PDF files, and we will be able to go back and upload the applications of previous members, however, it will be vital that any credit card information is deleted. If this information is not deleted, fines can be incurred. Once the application has been uploaded to the individual members MALTA account that document will follow them the rest of their VFW Auxiliary life so they will have that information if they transfer, etc.

There is a lot more to the

Treas/Sec - Cont. on Page 6

Claims and Service Office Report

By Jon Gohn, Claims Director

Why the VFW Provides Free Services

November 4, 2025

A government watchdog study in June revealed a high rate of potential mental health conditions among more than 50,500 troops surveyed upon exiting the military in 2023 and early 2024.

Published on June 5 by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the report found that two-thirds of those troops might suffer from mental health conditions requiring follow-up.

"We know that military service is by nature dangerous and stressful," said VFW National Veterans Service (NVS) Director Michael Figlioli. "Exposure to stressors of all types often causes PTSD, depression or other related issues. That is the exact reason VFW provides essential free services linking these separating members with their VA benefits."

GAO, which also examined the VA's mental health screening for troops on their way out of the service between 2023 and early 2024, noted flaws in the manner in which service members were screened for PTSD and other mental health risks.

"Given concerns about the risk of suicide and other mental health challenges following service members' separation from military service, it is essential that they receive effective mental health screenings prior to separation," GAO officials wrote. "Such screenings can lead to the early identification of individuals potentially at high risk and help direct them to further assessment, treatment and intervention."

The concern stemmed from another troubling statistic noted in the report.

Of the troops who exhibited mental health risks, according to the study, more than half declined referrals to transitional programs run by the DOD, which offer counseling and other treatment opportunities to service members leaving the military.

For service officers at VFW, this conundrum is a two-fold problem requiring a solution.

"VFW knows statistically, separating service members are most at risk for suicide during the first year of leaving the military," Figlioli said. "That is why we stress the importance of working with these transitioning service members as early as possible. These critical benefits provide the safety net of income, housing, employment assistance and health care that their service has earned them."

Last year, VFW's NVS network of 2,000 service officers helped more than 590,500 veterans receive \$14.62 billion in VA benefits, including back pay. Among other locations, VFW service officers are located in 26 pre-discharge claim sites across the U.S. and abroad, with locations in Europe, Guantanamo Bay and Korea being covered remotely by service officers. To find a service officer near you, visit <https://www.vfw.org/NVS>.

This article is featured in the November/December 2025 issue of VFW magazine.

Putting Veterans First: Is the Current VA Disability System Keeping its Promise?

October 29, 2025

The following is part of the testimony by Ryan Gallucci, Executive Director, Washington Office of the VFW before the United States Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The complete article can be found at www.VFW.org, under Media and Events.

WASHINGTON -- When a young American raises their right hand, swears an oath, and signs DD Form 4—the enlistment contract—they agree to surrender their personal freedoms, obey all lawful orders, risk life and limb, and if ordered, march into combat. In return, that contract entitles them to pay, health care, and benefits earned through service and sacrifice. That is not charity. That is a contract. And every man and woman who wore the uniform has already honored their end of it. The nation must honor that contract.

Yet lately, we have witnessed an appalling resurgence of old, poisonous rhetoric. Recently, The Washington Post has smeared America's veterans as freeloaders, insinuating that their hard-earned benefits are too generous and are part of a system plagued by fraud. They talk about the cost of veterans' health care as if it were some line item to be trimmed, rather than the moral obligation of a nation that has been at war for a quarter of a century. These attacks are beneath the dignity of the country our veterans defended.

We have seen this playbook before. In 1933, the National Economy League and the Economy Act gutted veterans' benefits, leaving many homeless and hopeless, and some dead by their own hand. In 1956, the so-called Bradley Commission tried to do it again, suggesting benefits be stripped from the "less disabled" and questioning the validity of conditions related to toxic exposure. Now, in 2025, we are watching the same poisonous ideas reemerge in slicker packaging. These bad ideas failed then and they should be put to rest yet again. Let's deal with the facts.

Fraud exists in every system that handles money—Medicare, Social Security, and yes, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). But it is rare, investigated, and prosecuted. It is not the identity of America's veterans. Those who claim that disability benefits are riddled with "fake" conditions like tinnitus, post-traumatic stress disorder, or chronic pain, are either ignorant or deliberately cruel. These are the signature wounds of modern warfare. Invisible does not mean imaginary.

And if someone thinks the passage of the historic PACT Act "lowered standards," I invite them to stand in the burn pits of Iraq or

Afghanistan and breathe what our troops breathed. Congress did not lower the bar, it finally leveled the field.

We should also address the myth that working veterans should not receive compensation. VA disability is not welfare. It compensates for loss of earning capacity, for the daily toll of living with injuries and illness that never go away. A paycheck does not erase a traumatic brain injury. A job does not make a missing leg grow back.

What truly drives bad behavior is not veterans, it's bad policy. When you design a system that forces veterans to reach 50 percent disability just to collect both retirement and disability pay, or 100 percent just to afford health care for their families, do not be shocked when veterans seek those higher thresholds. Fix the system, and you fix the incentives. If you want to crack down on exploitation, start with the real predators—the claim sharks who charge illegal fees, falsify paperwork, and profit from veterans' confusion and pain.

And let's ask a harder question: Why now? Why are veterans being identified as the problem, while billionaires dodge taxes and corporations thrive on defense contracts? Maybe it is because it is easier to scapegoat those who cannot fight back politically, the same way it was in 1933.

The all-volunteer force is the backbone of our national defense. For 25 years, it has borne the burden of continuous war and global deployments. Those volunteers kept their promise. They served with honor. Now the country must keep its word.

The VFW calls on Congress, the Administration, and every American citizen to Honor the Contract. Do not balance the budget on the backs of veterans. Do not rewrite history to make our heroes into freeloaders. And do not forget that the benefits our veterans receive today built the American middle class after World War II. They made this country stronger.

The Truth About VA Claims and Accredited VSOs

The Washington Post claimed

that Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) encourage veterans to file as many claims as possible to exploit the system. VSOs have been labeled as the "disability industrial complex." These suppositions are insultingly false. For VSOs, the reality is that providing the human service of accredited VA claims assistance is a large financial liability, costing the VFW tens of millions of dollars across our enterprise every year. We take on this duty to ensure that new generations do not suffer the way previous generations did.

When we train our representatives, they are instructed to work with the veteran to file a claim for any condition that the veteran believes is related to or caused by service. When our accredited representatives meet with veterans, we discuss the regulations and always file an ethical claim. We never exaggerate or embellish a claim in any manner. In fact, we have even invited the VA Office of the General Counsel (OGC) to audit our training program to show our practices. If we were not confident that we are in full compliance with OGC requirements, why would we call attention to ourselves? That was more than four years ago. We are still waiting. Yet, the venerable *The Washington Post* chose instead to associate us with the bad actors who continue to take advantage of veterans, family members and their survivors. Sadly, the Post failed to mention that our organization has been the leading voice in the veteran community against fraud for years.

As an accredited organization authorized to prepare, present, and prosecute claims before VA, VFW accredited representatives are subject to the rules and regulations set forth by the Department of Veterans Affairs under 38 CFR Part 14. These regulations are very clear about conforming to ethical standards, which among other things states that "all individuals providing representation are required to be truthful in their dealings with claimants and VA" (38 CFR 14.632 (2)). This citation invalidates the point made by *The Washington Post* that VSOs encourage claimants to seek benefits to which they may not be entitled or otherwise misrepresent what the claimant is seeking. We are

Claims - Cont. on Page 6

Veterans Claim Service

Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Bldg.

1 Federal Drive, Room G900, Saint Paul, MN 55111

Phone: (612) 970-5669

FAX: (612) 970-5404

email: vfw.vbaspl@va.gov

We'll Help with YOUR Veteran Benefits

Message From Your National Council Member

By Dale Hoogeveen,
National Council Member

The National Council of Administration met in Kansas City on September 20-21, 2025, which resulted in me not attending our Department Fall Conference. National Headquarters and the 52 Departments make every effort to deconflict schedules but sometimes the calendar simply runs out of days! I will attempt to make up for lost time at our Midwinter Conference, and I invite you to ask questions you may have pertaining to the National Council.

One of the key responsibilities of the Council is to "approve and adopt an annual budget. The National Council of Administration shall have full power to fix salaries of all officers and employees of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States."

The finance committee examined in detail the proposed budget of \$102.6 million presented by Quartermaster General Garduno and recommended adoption by the council, which we did.

Additional topics discussed at the meeting were:

1. Pay structure and adjustment to the Minimum and Maximum levels. Following the recommendations of CBIZ, a national provider of financial, insurance, and advisory services, the Council approved a 3.3% increase to the pay levels. This increase ensures national headquarters employee compensation remains competitive to attract and retain highly qualified employees. The financial impact was minimal, affecting 26 employees.
2. Fund Raising – The VFW contracts with Innovairre, the worldwide leader in fundraising supporting nonprofits and agencies. Recognizing we need to spend money to make money, this company continues to increase solicited donations to the VFW. Innovairre also guarantees a level of revenue. That means if their fundraising efforts fall short of the contract terms, Innovairre contributes the difference.
3. THC infused beverages – Many of our younger members prefer THC infused beverages to alcohol. Representatives of the Torch beverage company participated in a lively discussion about the pros and cons of such drinks after which the Council entered into an agreement with Torch authorizing the company to advertise themselves as a supporter of the VFW.

Commander in Chief Whitmore's Department of Iowa hosted her homecoming event in Des Moines followed by the Big 10 Conference in Bettendorf. The Department of Iowa

Normandy - Cont. from Page 1

This 81st such Legacy flight involved approximately 30 veterans. Delta hosted a nonstop flight from Atlanta to Deauville, Normandy Airport on June 1, arriving in Deauville on June 2 and returning to Atlanta on June 9.

The veterans, while in Normandy participated in a series of special commemorative events that honored the memory, legacy and sacrifice of the service members – fueling cross-cultural connection and education. The veterans were honored in the many towns, villages and schools in the area. The citizens, young and old, dressed in period clothes, driving restored jeeps, trucks and parachuted out of planes all to commemorate their heroes, the American G.I.

These events are all a part of the D-Day Festival Normandy. It takes place along the entire coastline of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy, from Pegasus Bridge to Sainte-Mère-Eglise, including Oustreham, Arromanches, Pointe du Hoc, and of course the five iconic sectors of Utah Beach, Omaha Beach, Gold Beach, Juno Beach and Sword Beach. In 2026, the Festival will run from May 30 – June 14. More information about the Festival can be found by googling "Normandy D-Day Festival 2026."

One veteran was reunited with a young boy he had befriended in 1944. While his unit was on a "rest break" in a small town in between combat, the two became inseparable. Eighty-one years later, the two were reunited and had a memorable time talking about how their lives had been impacted by the War and what had happened over the past years.

Another veteran who had met a young French girl in 1944 was reunited with her. After 81 years, that flame was rekindled. They were married on his visit to Normandy.

This year's Legacy Flight was a cooperative effort between Delta Airlines, The Best Defense Foundation, Michelin Tire and the citizens of Normandy, France.

The Best Defense Foundation is a nonprofit organization focused on helping military veterans and their families by providing a once in a lifetime experience at no cost. More information on this organization can be found at www.bestdefensefoundation.org.

What began as a simple conversation between the founder Donnie Edwards, former NFL linebacker, and a WWII veteran resulted in the Best Defense Foundation. Its mission is to "take care of the ones who took care of us." Since 2018, the Best Defense Foundation has taken hundreds of WWII veterans back to the places they fought and helped to liberate.

As the WWII generation fades, the Foundation's goal will begin the next phase of its mission: the

did a wonderful job hosting the events and Minnesota was well represented at each. PDC Curt Hermanson was elected chairman of the conference and PDC David Staehlin was elected vice-chairman – congratulations to them. The Conference will certainly benefit from their leadership!

Dan West to be Nat'l VFW Rep at Midwinter Conference

Dan West was appointed the Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. on July 21, 2022.

He served in the United States Marine Corps from 1983 to 1994, serving in Operation Desert Storm.

He joined the VFW in 1996 at Post 3413 in San Marcos, Texas, where he maintains his Gold Legacy Life membership. He served in elected and appointed positions at the Post, District and Department Levels, culminating with his election as Department Commander in 2015.

Dan worked at the Department of Texas VFW for 15 years culminating the last three years as the State Adjutant/Quartermaster. On the national level, he has served as Vice Chair on the National Military Services and Iraq/Afghanistan Committees, as a member of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Veterans and Military



Support Committee, a Special Aide-de-Camp, a national certified recruiter, and as a member of the National Council of Administration representing the Department of Texas.

He is a member of the Disabled American Veterans, and the Marine Corps League.

Dan and his wife Beth, reside in Texas.

Cynthia Davis to be Nat'l VFW Auxiliary Rep at Midwinter

Cynthia Palmer Davis of Randallstown, Maryland was elected to the office of National Guard of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) Auxiliary at its 112th National Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

She is now in the first of five offices leading to the National Presidency, which she is expected to hold in 2030-2031.

A Life Member of John and Samuel Tyson-Wilbert Walker Memorial Auxiliary 8509 in Baltimore, Maryland, she joined on the eligibility of her brother, Jerome Fleming, who served in the U.S. Army from 1965 to 1969 during the Vietnam War. Cynthia has served as Auxiliary, District and Department President, National District Council Member #3 and National Membership Eastern Conference Coach.



She retired from the Social Security Administration after serving over 39 years and her family includes four children, five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Cynthia enjoys volunteering for the Auxiliary at VA Medical Center, Gilchrist Center and Moveable Feast.



U.S. Army nurse greeted by the children and residents of the Normandy area during a Normandy Day parade.

Treas/Sec - Cont. from Page 4

Membership Application change as well, but I will cover all of it in a training session during the Midwinter Conference in Brooklyn Park. Plan to be there on Saturday, January 17, 2026, to learn more about this big change. The most important thing to know about this now is that

OLD APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AFTER JANUARY 1, 2026.

I will be happy to train your District if you would like to do that – either in person or via ZOOM. Just reach out to me at the Department HQ at 651-291-1759.

2026 Midwinter Conference - January 16-18, 2026



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS - DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA



VFW MIDWINTER CONFERENCE

January 16-18, 2026

Marriott NW, 7025 Northland Dr.

Brooklyn Park, MN 55428

Tentative (9-16-2025)

FRIDAY, January 16

6:30 - 10:30am	Breakfast Buffet in the Wadsworth Restaurant (\$20/person)	
8:30 - 9:30am	Pre-Con Meeting	Arbor Lakes
10:00 - 11:00am	VFW Internal Affairs Committee	Lake Michigan
NOON - 4:00pm	<u>Registration and Banquet Tickets</u>	Northland Foyer
1:00 - 2:00pm	VFW Finance Committee	Lake Michigan
2:00 - 5:00pm	VFW Claims Open Office Hours	Arbor Lakes
2:00 - 3:00pm	VFW Charitable Association	Lake Huron
2:30 - 3:30pm	Auxiliary Hospital Reps & Deps Meeting (Invitation Only)	Lake Michigan
3:00 - 4:30pm	Gambling Seminar	Elm Creek
3:00 - 6:00pm	Displays and Vendors	Hallway in front of MN Ballroom Lobby
6:00 - 8:00pm	VFW Council of Administration	Minnesota Ballroom
6:00 - 9:00pm	Auxiliary Council of Administration	Northland Ballroom

SATURDAY, January 17

7:00 - 11:00am	Breakfast Buffet in the Wadsworth Restaurant (\$20/person)	
7:00 - 9:00am	Register Poppy Displays	Hallway from Hotel Lobby to Northland Foyer Area
8:00 - 10:00am	VFW Committee Meetings	Lake Michigan
	VFW Bylaws Committee	Lake Erie
	VFW Riders	Lake Huron
	Legislative Committee	Northland Foyer
	<u>Registration and Banquet Tickets</u>	Hallway in front of MN Ballroom Lobby
	Displays and Vendors	Northland Ballroom
9:30 - 2:30pm	Auxiliary Meeting	
9:30 - 10:20am	“Suicide Prevention Class” Speaker: Lieutenant Colonel (ret.) Sean Alderman, MN, U.S. Army, Founder of Magnus. He will highlight the importance of breaking isolation, recognizing crisis signs, and building networks to support veterans beyond traditional systems like the VA. Joint Session	
10:30 - 11:30am	“Members Rights” Speaker Dan West, National Adjutant General. The focus on clarity and governing principles. Suspension and revocation of Charter; Vacancies and removal of elected officers or committee members; Appointed Delegates; Arrearages, deficiencies, and omissions; Eligibility to office; Commemoratives and tributes; and Rules of Order.	Northland Ballroom
11:30 - 1:00pm	Lunch Break	Minnesota Ballroom
1:00 - 2:00pm	“Burial At Fort Snelling: It’s Not Automatic for Veterans” Presenter: Shane Buldra, representing Dignity Memorial/Sunset Cemetery in Minneapolis. He will provide an overview of the steps Veterans must take to establish eligibility and make advance arrangements for burial at Fort Snelling National Cemetery. JOINT Session	
2:00 - 3:00pm	Women Veterans Meeting w/Jennifer Warren	Northland Ballroom
2:00 - 3:30pm	District VOD Winners Party	Hennepin Salon 3
4:00 - 5:00pm	Catholic Service	Hennepin Salon 1
4:00 - 5:00pm	Non-Denominational Church Service	Lake Michigan
5:30 - 6:30pm	District VOD Winners Reception	Lake Huron
5:30 - 6:45pm	Banquet Reception (Cash Bar)	Arbor Lakes
6:30pm	Line up for the Procession	Atrium
6:45pm	Banquet Doors Open	
7:00 - 9:30pm	Grand Banquet Procession begins into the Grand Ballroom and Dinner and Program	

SUNDAY, January 18

7:00 - 11:00am	Breakfast in the Wadsworth Restaurant (\$20/person)	
8:00 - 10:00am	VFW Council of Administration	Minnesota Ballroom

Midwinter - Cont. from Page 1

work and mission.

Friday's schedule includes the MN VFW Charitable Association meeting, the Gambling Seminar, the Auxiliary meeting, and more. The day will conclude with Council Meetings for both the VFW and the Auxiliary, where program updates, financial reports, and other official business will be conducted. These sessions offer valuable insight into the operations and oversight of the Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary.

The VFW Council of Administration will reconvene on Sunday at 8:00 a.m. to wrap up their official business for the Midwinter Conference.

On Saturday morning, three VFW Committee meetings will be held: **Bylaws, Legislative, and VFW Riders**, all of which are open to any interested members.

The Marriott provides a spacious and welcoming environment that allows us to expand our activities and offer more to attendees. During the Midwinter Conference, we feature a variety of displays and vendors designed to interest everyone from

Veterans Homes to the always popular Buddy Poppy Contest.

Midwinter is the perfect opportunity to repurpose leftover Buddy Poppies for the annual contest. Posts and Auxiliaries are invited to create displays in one of three categories: **1. Memorial; 2. Promotional; and 3. Decorative**. First and second place winners in each category will qualify to compete at the VFW National Convention in July.

The highlight of the Midwinter Conference is always the Grand Banquet on Saturday evening. During the banquet, we will receive special greetings from our VFW and the Auxiliary National Representatives.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to all of our 2026 Award Sponsors for their generous support in making this event possible. One of the most anticipated parts of the evening is the awards presentation. We will proudly recognize our three State Teachers of the Year in the K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade categories.

The evening continues with a moving moment as we hear the

Midwinter - Cont. on Page 10

HOUSING RESERVATIONS

VFW Midwinter Conference 2026

Friday, January 16 -- Sunday, September 18, 2026

Marriott NW

7025 Northland Dr., Brooklyn Park, MN 55424

For Reservations call 763-536-8300

Be Specific, Say: 2026 Annual Midwinter Conference

Room Rate: \$134/night + tax

(Standard King OR Two Double Beds)

Check in: 4pm Check out: 11am

DEADLINE -- December 29, 2025

Reserve online at vfwmn.org/news/Midwinter Conference/click

Annual Midwinter Banquet

Saturday, January 17, 2026

Tickets \$50/person (No Refunds)

Reception 5:30pm Dinner 7:00pm

Deadline: Monday, December 29, 2025

Menu: Cabernet Braised Short Ribs, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans, Dessert, Rolls, Coffee, and Water.

Banquet/Dinner Tables seat 10 people

Tickets will be reserved under the name of the person designated on the order form. The decrease in ticket price is offset by revenue from program book ads; i.e. \$15/person.
(Tickets will be at the Registration Table in the Northland Foyer)

Mail & Make checks payable to:

Dept. of MN - VFW
PO Box 17146
St. Paul, MN 55117

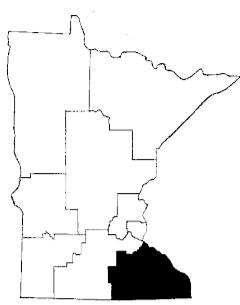
Please Reserve _____ Tickets at \$50/person Fall Conference Casual Dinner.

Name: _____

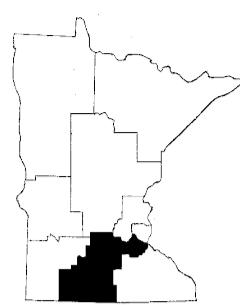
Phone: _____ Post/Auxiliary # _____ District # _____

Email: _____

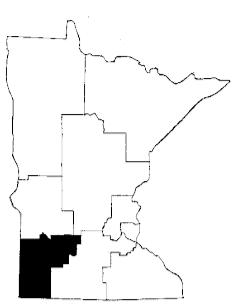
News from YOUR District Commanders and Presidents!



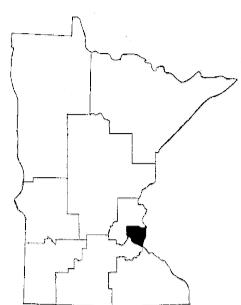
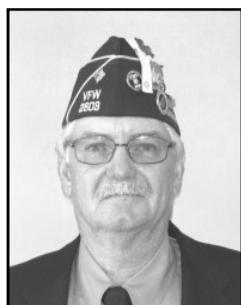
Troy Helget, Commander
First District



Cheryl Burton, Commander
Second District



Merle Rabenberg, Commander
Third District



Sean Gustafson, Commander
Fourth District



Hello Comrades,

I hope everyone had a wonderful summer. Now with fall upon us, I hope everyone stays safe with this year's hunting season. For those farmers bringing in the fall harvest, please stay safe out there as well.

Here at 1st District, we are wrapping up our annual post inspections. Big shout out to all the post quartermasters and post commanders for making the inspections a successful undertaking. Also, a big pat on the back to the District Post Inspector. Driving all those miles and finding the time in your busy schedule to complete the post inspections, thank you.

POST HIGHLIGHTS

Rochester VFW Post 1215 is supporting the Tom Eckdahl memorial disabled veteran's deer hunts. The two hunts are being facilitated by the DAV and Olmstead County Parks. The archery and firearms hunts are being held at Oxbow Park and Chesterwoods Park from 31 October to 30 November. There are a total of 15 archery hunters and 31 firearms hunters. Thank you for the solicitation of all the volunteers and supporters.

Waseca VFW Post facilitated a community health screening in September for the general public and veterans. The turnout exceeded everyone's expectations and plans are already being made to hold another health screening next year. Great job everyone.

Stewartville VFW Post 8980 put together and delivered 15 holiday care packages to local veterans that are currently living in Stewartville's assisted care facilities. Each care package comes with a comforter blanket, a long-stemmed rose, and great conversations. Thank you everyone.

Lastly, as you may recall, this year's membership goal for 1st District is 102%. There are several posts that are very close to this goal, only needing a few more new members. Congrats to the posts below for reaching this goal:

Zumbro Falls 103%
Northfield 104%
Stewartville 102%

Keep up the great work!

I look forward to seeing all of you at the Midwinter Conference and the Midwinter Banquet honoring our Voice of Democracy and Patriot Pen winners. Don't forget to make your reservations. The due dates are fast approaching.

Greetings, comrades of the Second District.

Our year is off to a strong and productive start with a well-attended district meeting in August, joined by our comrades as well as the brothers and sisters of the Auxiliary. Please remember, it is essential that each post has a representative present at every district meeting to stay informed and engaged.

District 2 is fortunate to have so many past district commanders serving as committee chairs who are willing to share their knowledge of and experience with their fellow comrades. I personally thank them all for their support and advice.

Congratulations to Post 1210 on a successful first quarter in membership. They won the Commander's Challenge. They will receive a 10' canopy recruiting tent for use at Post functions and recruiting drives. A big congratulations to Montgomery Post 5340 for achieving 109.3% membership by October 15. Close behind is Hastings Post 1210, reaching an impressive 103.3%. Additionally, both Le Sueur Post 4297 and Burnsville Post 5833 have already reached 100%, we need to stay on track to hit 102% by December 31st. Great work by all, let's keep the momentum going!

Congratulations to District 2 VFW Auxiliary 210. Levi Coyour, a high school senior, earned third place in the National Patriotic Art Contest and was awarded a \$3,500 national scholarship.

On September 6th, Prior Lake Post 6208 had a membership table during Military Appreciation Day at Sutton Farms in Jordan, Minnesota. The event saw an excellent turnout of 1,000 people or more. Many veterans stopped by to visit, ask questions to learn more about our organization.

The 2nd District has lost one of our former District Commanders, Don VanEyll, who passed away on Saturday, August 9th. Services were held in Chaska, MN.

On July 26, 2025, I attended a commemorative event in Madelia, Minnesota, hosted by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. The ceremony was supported by two members of the organization, along with 17 Honor Guard members from the Madelia and St. James VFW and American Legion posts.

The Fall Conference at the Crowne Plaza in Plymouth was a tremendous success. The accommodation was excellent, and

DISTRICT 2 - Cont. on Page 10

DIST. 2 AUX. - Found on Page 11

Greetings from the 3rd District

We are still flying high with our district making 102% recruiting goal. Minnesota Senior Vice Commander Charles Hawkins Sr. gave awards to Redwood County VFW Post 2553 (124%), Minneota-Taunton VFW Post 5334 and myself. We were honored to be recognized in front of our peers.

Veterans Day was observed in various ways in our communities. Redwood County VFW Commander Jerome Ludwig addressed Redwood Valley High School students in the afternoon. I wasn't there but knowing Jerome it was both informative and entertaining and enjoyed by all attendees. Voak-Janssen VFW Post 3958 along with Worthington American Legion Honor Guard presented the colors at the annual Worthington High School Veterans day program. They did double duty for veterans as they did the same program on the 12th for the Worthington Middle School. Good on them. Pacholl-Moser Post 2603 (Wilmont) honored Korean War vet Stanley Hoffman, He was recently awarded a Quilt of Valor quilt with a potluck celebration.



Diane Rabenberg, Auxiliary
President Third District

Greetings from the Third District.

Our first meeting of the new year was in October at Minneota. We had good attendance, but it was bittersweet since there was one less auxiliary in our roll call. Mongeau-Tholen Auxiliary #742 officially closed at the end of August. During the meeting we discussed Chairman Bulletins, ran through information from Fall Conference, and did a School of Instruction on the duties of the other officers as listed in Building On The VFW Auxiliary Foundation.

Our official visits have been completed, and local contest winners have been forwarded to the district level. We anxiously await the district results.

Everyone has been busy in preparation for Veteran's Day programs. Honoring our Veterans is such an important calling.

Our next meeting will be in Worthington on January 3rd.

Wishing you all a joyous holiday season and a happy new year!

See you all at the Midwinter Conference.

Happy Holidays Fighting Fourth!

I hope you all had meaningful Veterans Day Holidays and joyful HALloweens with your loved ones. In the last quarter I've been to at least one Post Meeting for each Post in our incredible District and I'm so proud of the work you all are doing. Two Posts (6690 Mendota, and 7555 Roseville Anderson Nelson) are already over 100% in strength, with Post 1782 White Bear Lake and Post 8752 Cottage Grove right behind them and our remaining Posts hot on their heels. ALL of you are doing wonderful things for Vets. Keep it up! If you need help or ideas, please don't hesitate to ask.

Changing tone for a second, this time of year can be really tough on Veterans and their families facing challenges. Please take some time to reach out to all the Vets you know and make sure they are doing OK. Our Posts and Department have some really helpful resources in dealing with Depression, Anxiety, and Financial Insecurity, among others. But you have to ask. A wonderful option for so many of our Vets with Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) are Service Dogs from Believer, District President Courts-Brown's project for this year. Please consider having an event and/or making an impactful donation to this amazing organization, details can be found at www.believer.org.

If you are aware of any Veterans (or anyone) who might need a place to go for Thanksgiving or Christmas Day, the Roseville VFW is open for both from noon to sixish, all are welcome. The hope is that all Vets will have a place to go for these two holidays.

Finally, please keep doing the many great things you all are doing, helping all of us live up to our motto "no one does more for Vets than us!"



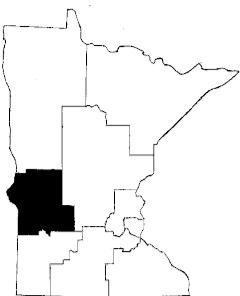
Deb Courts-Brown, Auxiliary
President Fourth District

Greetings from the 4th District!

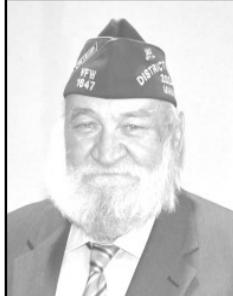
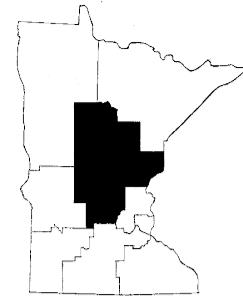
I am happy to report all our official visits have been completed. It has been educational to see how each auxiliary meeting is run, hear about the wonderful things they are doing, and meet so many members. They have been very active with fundraising and supporting veterans.

Post 1350 Auxiliary in North St. Paul serves Dagos the first Monday

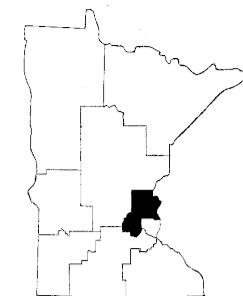
DIST. 4 AUX. - Cont. on Page 11



Lee Christopherson, Commander
Fifth District



Donald Lohse, Commander
Sixth District



Dennis Maddox, Commander
Seventh District

Greetings from the 5th!

It has been a wonderful fall and we all know what is coming, yes, the great Minnesota winter. The fall events in the 5th have been booming with several Posts continuing to support the fine communities that they reside in.

I would like to spotlight a few members in the 5th District for their involvement and contribution to the VFW.

Cassie Mead from Post 7902 for her dedication to organizing and promoting the annual Wreaths across America for several years. This is a highlight of the year when we can honor our veterans with a symbol of our gratitude. Thank You Comrade Mead.

The Membership of Post 5039 in Morris on there forethoughts of a perpetual funding for a scholarship for Veterans at the college, for a small-town post they have a big heart.

Post 936 & 7902 for the Coffee and Donuts they do for the Veterans every month. It is a great venue for veterans to sit down and talk about the experiences of serving. If you have the time please stop on in for a cup of Coffee, donut, and a great time with fellow veterans. Post 7902 has their Coffee and Donuts the 3rd Thursday of every month and Post 936 every Friday.

Midwinter Conference is coming fast and I look forward on seeing all the fine members of this great state, See you all in Brooklyn Park

Our next District meeting is scheduled for January 25th at Willmar VFW Post 1639 at 2 PM.

I highly encourage the members of the 5th District to be at the meeting especially Post Commanders. As always there is an open invite for any other members from other districts that would like to attend, we will greet you with open arms.

In Closing, I am looking forward to seeing all of you at the Various VFW functions and I would like to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and a Very Merry Christmas.



Cindi Nelson, Auxiliary
President Fifth District

Good day from District 5 Auxiliary.

We had our first district meeting in October in Alexandria for this year. In working with District 5 Commander (Lee Christopherson) we offered our members school of instructions for two of our programs. I think we all took away good pointers to help make these programs

Greetings from your Commander. Veterans Day is behind us, many posts observed this day in many ways, Honor Guards visiting local schools, Veterans Memorials, and cemeteries. My heartfelt thanks go out to everyone in the District who participated.

In August, our District Meeting was held in Wadena. The budget for the upcoming year was approved, with one deletion. The Turkey BBQ is no longer a line item, due to the cancellation of the meal during the Covid episode, and not being re-approved by the VA hospital. New District polo shirts were distributed to line officers, appointed officers, and committee chairs as appropriate.

The October District meeting in Little Falls was a success, with the District Auxiliary auction being the highlight of the day and with Todd Roberts, Department Judge Advocate as the "Auctioneer".

The December District meeting will be held at Post 428 St. Cloud, the Granite Post. The days events will be lunch at 11:00, followed by presentation of Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen scholarship awards at about 12:00, with the business meeting afterwards.

Looking forward, Midwinter conference is in January, hoping to see everyone there. A reminder, there is NO February District meeting, per motion and approval at the 2025 District Convention in Browerville, which brings the District into compliance with District, Department and National Bylaws.

The 2026 District Convention will be held in Jenkins, at Post 3839, starting at 1000. It will be a joint session with the Auxiliary, in a Loyalty Day Ceremony, followed by lunch, then the business session, with nominations and election of officers for the 2026/27 business year. Per tradition, and for personal reasons, I will not accept a nomination for a third year as District Commander.



Peg Snoke, Auxiliary
President Seventh District

Brothers and Sisters of the Auxiliary and Comrades.

Greetings from the 7th District. What a busy season it has been with membership dinners, district meetings and official visits, Veterans Day events and craft fairs and holiday events.

Remember, the need for new members. It is our life line. Without new members we will not survive. So, join up all those younger family members to keep us flourishing.

Thank you to all our veterans for your service to our country.

DISTRICT MEETINGS

First District

Dec. 6 Waseca #1642 @ 9:30 AM

Second District

Jan. 10 Chaska #1791 @ 1:00 PM

Third District

Jan. 3 Worthington #3958 @ 10:00 AM

Fourth District

Jan. 10 No. St. Paul #1350 @ 9:00 AM

Fifth District

Jan. 25 Willmar #1639 @ 2:00PM

Sixth District

Dec. 6 St. Cloud #428 @ 11:00 AM

Seventh District

Dec. 20 Bloomington #1296 @ 10:00 AM

Eighth District

Feb. 7 Grand Rapids #1720 @ 9:00 AM

Ninth District

Dec. 13 Det. Lakes #1676 @ 11:00 AM

MOC

Feb. 21 Monticello #8731 @ 10:00 AM



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



Denise Biggs, Auxiliary
President Sixth District

Hello from the 6th District!

Another Sixth District poppy display went to the National Convention. We were very honored to take the display to Columbus, Ohio.

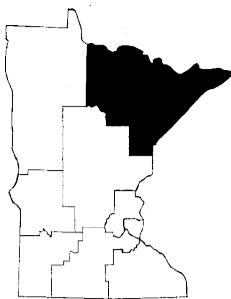
The president's project this year is called Muskie Mission. They take a group of veterans out to fish for Muskies on Leach Lake in September. All equipment is supplied, and they go home with that equipment and can go Muskie fishing on their own. "Healin' through fishin'" is one of their sayings.

On Veteran's Day, the Browerville Post and Auxiliary set up luminaries for Light up for Veterans. This year we reached 1500 luminaries. Set up started at 4pm, with a ceremony at 6pm and the lighting of candles immediately after. Lunch was provided afterwards.

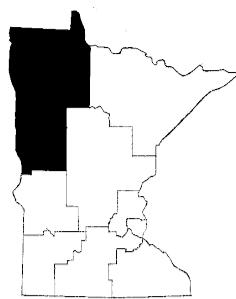
Our December meeting brings more information on how auxiliaries are serving veterans and information from our chairman AND the cookie walk.

can be found on their website at magnusveteransfoundation.org.

Finally, I hope everyone has a Happy Thanksgiving. I would like to wish all of you and your families a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Charles Cossette, Commander
Eighth District



Curtis Anderson, Commander
Ninth District

Comrades,

I hope that you are all having a wonderful holiday season, and I wish many blessings to you and your families. This can be a very difficult time of year for our fellow veterans and family members; I ask that you reach out to your members you haven't seen in a while or talked to and do a buddy check and make sure they are doing ok. That small gesture could make their day.

The next big event we have coming up is the Department Midwinter Conference on 16-18 January, in Brooklyn Park, MN. recognizing the Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen winners and runner ups, also the Buddy Poppy Competition. I hope to see you there to help us represent the mighty District 8.

Then on the 7th of February, we will be having our District Midwinter meeting in Grand Rapids at Post 1720. We must have at least one representative from each post there, I look forward to seeing all of you there as we will be recognizing our District Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pens winners and the runners up for the district.

It is an honor to serve as your District Commander and I look forward to continuing to come out to the posts and meet all our members. I have been doing my best to also meet with the Auxiliary members before their meeting. I believe that together we can accomplish amazing things for our veterans and the communities we live in.

In Closing I would like to thank you all for your dedication to our organization, I see the hard work you all put into your Posts and the District. I am very proud to be apart of this district and to be of service to all of you.



Marlaina Hart, Auxiliary
President Eighth District

Hello to all VFW and Auxiliary members in Minnesota.

District 8 is busy honoring our awesome Veterans!

For Veterans' Day many Posts and Auxiliaries did various programs at nursing homes with gifts given to Veterans. There was a dinner and program which included setting and explanation of the "Missing Man Table" at one club and ham and steak dinners at a couple other Posts. There was a ceremony at a Veteran's Park and the Patriot's Pen winner for that Post read their essay, with lunch after. Invitations were sent from schools asking Veterans to be present for their Veterans' Day Programs. One Post did a Quilts of Valor Presentation

Aloha from the 9th District!

I hope you all enjoyed a fun and treat-filled Halloween season. My family wrapped up our annual ghosts-and-goblins neighborhood adventure, and now we're jumping right into youth hockey season—never a dull moment!

A big thank-you to Commander Warren Olson, Auxiliary President Connie Nelson, and the Roseau Post and Auxiliary for hosting a wonderful District meeting in September. Your hard work and hospitality made it a great success. I truly appreciate everything our Posts and Auxiliaries are doing across the district—your dedication to serving veterans, families, and communities continues to shine. Mahalo!

Thank you as well to everyone who partnered with schools to promote Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen. Your efforts help inspire young leaders and build strong civic values. I can't wait to review this year's entries and celebrate our winners.

As we move into the holiday season, I know many Posts will be honoring veterans and supporting community needs through ceremonies, food drives, toy collections, and care-package efforts. These projects show the heart of who we are—veterans serving veterans and giving back.

I look forward to seeing you in Detroit Lakes on December 13th, and then the Department Midwinter Conference in January. Wishing all of you a warm, joyful holiday season. Happy Holidays!

for 7 Post members with the help of students from a local school. They helped drape the quilt around the shoulders of the recipient, with booya being served until gone, at the Club. Another Post served Mulligan Stew from 2pm until gone.

The Halloween Party at the Silver Bay Veteran's Home was a huge success! Volunteers and local students came in to help residents with Bingo. Later the little kids come in to trick or treat throughout the Home. Residents gave out treats to the little goblins all dressed up in their Halloween garb.

Thanksgiving and Christmas are coming fast and we're getting ready to remember our shut-in Veterans and those in nursing homes and assisted living facilities with cards and baskets of goodies.

Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy entries have been judged and sent to the District to be judged.

See you all at Midwinter.

Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas from District 8!

COMMANDER - Cont. from Page 1

Please visit the VFW National website vfw.org and the Department of MN website vfwmn.org on a regular basis. You will find information, forms, events, and more. Please read the monthly GENERAL ORDERS. They answer most of the common questions the Department office gets every day.

One last note, if you have not contributed to my Commander's Project, the VFW National Home, please consider donating to this great facility. The flyer for this fundraiser is in the General Orders and on the Department website.



Shirley Quist, Auxiliary
President Ninth District

Our Brothers and Sisters send each of you greetings and well wishes. We are grateful for your service to our country.

Good things are happening in the Minnesota 9th District VFW Auxiliary. Fall has been a season full of activities. Our September 9th District meeting was hosted by Roseau VFW Post 8663 and Auxiliary. Post Commander Warren Olson and Auxiliary President Connie Nelson did an amazing job organizing and attending to every detail.

Our District meetings not only take care of the business of the VFW Auxiliary but share ways each Auxiliary serves our Veterans and the programs of the VFW. The Auxiliaries are out in the Veterans Homes, schools and their communities. Some of our activities include Honor Flight fundraising, Vietnam Veteran Car Shows, marching in local and Veterans Home Parades, booths at local fairs and events distributing information on veteran's services, mental health and membership. We volunteer at Veterans Homes and local assisted living facilities. We attend Stand Downs, Boots on the Ground, award Quilts of Valor, place Flags at cemeteries in memory of Post and Auxiliary members, participate in Wreaths Across America, and remember those who are Prisoners of War and Missing in Action.

One story I would like to share from a recent visit to an Auxiliary in the 9th District, that filled me with awe and pride and is exactly what our mission is - to serve Veterans. Members of the Auxiliary noticed a Veteran in their community who was struggling with everyday needs. It took time to gain trust. They did not give up. The Auxiliary took care of cleaning and organizing the Veteran's home. They made the VSO aware, and the Veteran received the support needed.

We are here to take care of our heroes, their families and our communities. At our District meeting we made keychains with colors of the Military Service Ribbon of our Veteran, so we always remember Our Reason Why.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the upcoming Midwinter Conference and Midwinter Banquet.

DISTRICT 2 - Cont. from Page 8

the food and camaraderie made the event truly enjoyable. Having all OTI classes in one room was a great advantage this year. It ensured everyone had the opportunity to learn the ropes without missing any information.

More than half of our district posts have successfully completed their annual inspections as of November 3rd. I want to extend my sincere thanks to the Post Commanders, Quartermasters, and Trustees for your hard work and dedication in making this process smooth and effective. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

I want to congratulate all the District Two members listed below for their exceptional performance which resulted in several National appointments. They have gone above and beyond in their leadership roles. National Deputy Chief of Staff Charles Dresen Post 6208; Assistant Inspector General Larry Grindland Post 1210; National Special Aide-de-Camp James Chambers Post 9433; National Special Aide-de-Camp Maria Maldonado Post 1791; National Aide-de-Camp Johnathan Brandtner Post 2854; National Aide-de-Camp Leah Brandtner Post 2854; National Aide-de Camp Rachel Maloney Post 6208.

The District Commander and President's Project this year is "Every Third Saturday" (ETS). It is dedicated to fostering a strong sense of community by meeting veterans where they are and addressing their individual needs. ETS offers a wide range of free services, including clothing and hygiene supplies, and meeting spaces for veteran groups.

Our next district meeting is January 10th, 2026, at Post 1791 in Chaska at 1 pm with Joint Meeting at Noon. Hope to see everyone there and keep up the great work!

Midwinter - Cont. from Page 7

winning speech from our Patriot's Pen essay contest champion (grades 6-8), on the topic: "How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?" This student will go on to compete at the national level for a chance to win the \$5,000 grand prize.

To close out the evening, we'll announce the nine District Voice of Democracy winners. The first place winner will deliver their powerful speech on this year's essay theme: "How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?"

The State Voice of Democracy winner will be honored with a beautiful trophy and a \$2,000 award, along with an all expenses paid trip to Valley Forge, PA Founding Forward where they will compete nationally for a \$35,000 scholarship.

If you've attended the Midwinter Conference in the past, you already know the value of the information, activities, and social opportunities it offers. So don't keep it to yourself and invite fellow members and make plans to attend the Department of Minnesota's Annual Midwinter Conference!



Kris Kohn, Auxiliary
President First District



Becky Selleck, Auxiliary
President Second District

District 1 has been busy fulfilling our mission of supporting veterans, their families and our communities. We are spending intentional efforts this year to ensure that our auxiliaries are strong and healthy, as we cannot do the work of the auxiliary if we are not first healthy ourselves. We are actively coaching and mentoring our auxiliaries during official visits, at District meetings, in email and phone conversations, and in every interaction, we all have and take the opportunity to both teach and to learn.

Our Auxiliaries have worked to strengthen the foundation of their local auxiliaries and used that strength to support our mission better than ever. District 1 has lived their mission through work with the Disabled Veteran Deer Hunt, working with our schools to teach our youth about their country and veterans through programs, reading, Voice of Democracy, Patriots Pen, and providing them service opportunities to teach them the value of service to others.

We remembered our veterans on November 11th, visited those who are in nursing homes, brought food to veterans and our food shelves to assist during the Federal Government Shutdown. We also visited veterans who are alone or in need of a friendly face, gave out thousands of poppies so that our communities never forget, and told the story of the VFW Auxiliary.

As we head into the holiday season, we will not slow down, for our veterans never slowed when the call came.

From all of us at District 1, we wish you all a wonderful holiday season and thank you for your service to those who served.

DIST. 5 AUX. - Cont. from Page 9

stronger. Lee and I will continue to work together to continue to offer this at our district meetings.

Our Auxiliary's have been so busy this fall working on the coloring contests, Patriot's Pen, and Voice of Democracy. I hope you all had a blessed Veterans Day.

Locally, our Auxiliary sponsored donuts and coffee before our program and lunch. We had a great turn out and even ran out of programs, which is wonderful. Several students and daycare centers painted pictures that were handed out at the program and also on the tables during the lunch.

Our local radio station (KIKV fm) was broadcasting live at our VFW for 3 hours with the Honor Flight to help raise money so more Veterans can go on this once in a life time trip. It was a busy day but rewarding.

I am excited to report that I have 2 inspections left in my district. If the weather holds out, I will have them done before the end of 2025.

It has been so rewarding going to the Auxiliary's to bring back different ideas. Because it is so close to Thanksgiving, I just have to say how thankful I am to be representing District 5.

We are already so close to being 100% in our district in membership and working hard to exceed that.

Remember to get your hotel rooms reserved and banquet tickets.

In closing I want to wish all a blessed Thanksgiving and thank our Veterans for their service.

DIST. 4 AUX. - Cont. from Page 8

of each month and uses the proceeds to support veterans' organizations.

The Roseville Auxiliary at Post 7555 donated to the Big Marine Vets Camp and the annual Thanksgiving dinner put on by the Vet's Riders Club. This fall they hosted a pork dinner, a pancake breakfast, and worked with the Post on their Booya event. It was sold out in 62 minutes!

Auxiliary 9024 in Woodbury sent cards and pins to veterans in care centers for Veterans Day. They do a second poppy drive around 9/11 and host bingo at the Hastings Veterans Home.

White Bear Lake Auxiliary 1782 created their first luminary event for Veterans Day. The veterans to be honored are those whose service inspired the members to join the auxiliary. The community was also invited to participate by sending in names and branches of service for veterans they wanted to honor.

Auxiliary 6690 in Mendota volunteered with *Feed My Starving Children* and supports the Armed Forces Service Center at the airport.

The Cottage Grove Auxiliary 8752 co-hosted the Hometown Heroes Golf Tournament. There were 136 golfers who participated. The event raised over \$17,000. They will also host a Corn Hole Tournament to raise funds for the Auxiliary.

These are just some examples of the work being done. I am very proud to be associated with the auxiliaries of the 4th District and the Department of Minnesota.

VFW Reaches \$16.2 Billion Cumulative Milestone for Represented Veterans

November 21, 2025

Washington - The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is proud to announce it has set a new milestone for its National Veterans Service (NVS) program by recouping \$16.2 billion in total compensatory awards for the more than 608,000 veterans it represents.

"Nothing makes me prouder than the work VFW Accredited Claims Representatives do day in and day out for veterans, transitioning service members and surviving dependents," said VFW National Commander Carol Whitmore. "It is astonishing to me that this profound amount of \$16.2 billion was recovered by men and women who do this service officer work free to the clients they assist. I am so grateful they are a part of our great organization."

The NVS Accredited Service Officer network is comprised of 2,278 dedicated professionals who are employed by the VFW, partner nonprofits, as well as state and local government agencies nationwide. Each service officer is accredited by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide free claims assistance to transitioning service members, veterans, their families and survivors. In the last year alone, this network processed approximately 164,000 new VA claims. Of those new claims, about 14,000 were filed through the VFW's Pre-Discharge Claims Program, which supports service members as they prepare to transition out

of the military. In all, NVS represented more than 608,000 claimants.

"Every day, our VFW Accredited Service Officers show the tenacity, dedication and genuine care that veterans deserve," said VFW NVS Director Michael Figlioli. "They stand shoulder-to-shoulder with those who wore the uniform, guiding them through the VA claims process and making sure they receive the benefits they've earned. I am truly humbled by their commitment, integrity and the life-changing impact they make for veterans and their families."

VA disability compensation is an earned benefit for veterans whose injuries or illnesses were sustained or aggravated during their military service. Although guaranteed by law and embedded in the promises made at enlistment, this benefit is not automatically granted. Veterans must establish service-connection by demonstrating three critical elements: an event, exposure or injury that occurred during service, a current diagnosis and a medical nexus connecting the two. Once eligibility is established and service connection is confirmed, disability compensation is provided to help offset the effects service-related conditions have during a veteran's lifetime.

The VFW's NVS program relies on grants and donors to operate. To support NVS during this giving season, visit <https://vfwfoundation.org/national-veterans-service/>.

Post 950 Hosts Reunion of 452nd General Supply Co.

District POST 950 in Mankato hosted the 35 year Desert Storm reunion for the 452nd General Supply Company. The 452nd was an Army Reserve unit that was activated for Vietnam, Desert Storm and Iraq Freedom and in 2007 folded the unit flag for the last time as part of the

USAR realignment. Heidi Heath is the post's manager with 35+ years of service at 950. She and her daughter prepared the delicious evening meal for the veterans and family members that attended. The Post has a spacious dining room for veterans to visit and catch up with their comrades.



(l - r) Dan Meyer - Past Dept. Commander, Jeff Kronback - Post QM, Heidi Heath - Manager, Chris Trebelhorn - Dept. Scouting Chair

Legislative Report

By Barry Henriksen, Legislative Chairperson



As your state and national legislative chair, I have a request for all of you. The National Legislative team in Washington DC has asked every state to ask for personal stories from their members and veterans that have been affected by the lack of legislation on our priority issues. For example, who has been harmed by Claim Sharks? Who has looked for alternative methods of treatment for PTSD? How about veterans that would benefit from the passing of the Major Richard Star Act? These

veterans are not receiving their full benefits due to offsetting disability pay and retirement benefits. These personal stories will give our state officers the ability to make an impact with our congressional members when we meet with them in Washington DC in March. We need the stories from every congressional district if possible. Thank you in advance.

On the state legislative side, the Commanders Task Force (CTF) has established the number one priority for the next legislative session. It is property tax exclusion for disabled veterans. Currently 70-99% disabled veterans are capped at \$150,000. CTF is proposing that this increase to \$225,000. For 100% disable veterans the current exclusion is \$300,000. The proposal would increase to \$450,000. This is way overdue. As we all know, costs have risen dramatically over the last few years, yet the exclusion has not. The state session starts in February, and I will send out updates.

Claims - Cont. from Page 5

duty bound to tell the veteran the truth, not what they want to hear. To portray accredited representatives in the same light as unaccredited individuals, who in fact do take advantage of the system, is insulting to the thousands who have dedicated their life's work to assisting the most vulnerable in achieving the benefits that are provided by law.

The PACT Act was by and large the most significant veteran legislation passed since the Agent Orange Act. It righted the wrong and corrected the unjust perception that many of the illnesses or diseases suffered by those who had been deployed were imagined and not real. For the thousands who were told that their breathing issues and rare cancers were unrelated to their service, it was recognition not just of those types of maladies but of all the downstream effects as well. Rhinitis, sinusitis, irritable bowel syndrome, and other life-changing injuries were proven to be side effects of breathing bad air and particulates from the toxins created by burn pits. Since then, we know it was not burn pits alone that have been causing illnesses. There are many other sources of exposure such as chemical, airborne, and radiation to name a few. The law requires continued medical research and reporting because we now know that it takes months, even years for injuries to manifest. Veterans did not ask what was being burned, to which chemicals they were exposed, or how it would impact their lives after service. They did their jobs, upheld their oaths, and executed the mission. Sadly, it took the government far too long to do its job. For many veterans, relief and treatment came too late. Although it is easy for some to dismiss their suffering as too costly to the taxpayer, this is the cost of sending our young men and women to war.

Many of our colleagues would gladly trade places with those of us who can walk a flight of stairs without running out of breath. Some have not had a full night's sleep for decades because their bodies reflexively interrupt them, so they do not suffocate to death or die of cardiac arrest. Others would certainly give up the cocktail of medications they may have to take for the rest of their lives just to return their body systems to as normal as possible, not to mention the physical or psychological side effects. I am sure that almost all would trade the potential weight gain, body aches, headaches or other side effects for normalcy.

Most veterans led full and active lifestyles during service, even after, until they began to experience medical issues that impact their lives. For some, they can no longer manage the activities of daily living. Others cannot function in what society would consider normal. They cannot be around people in social settings, they cannot leave their homes due to their fragile state, they cannot hold a job. Are we suggesting these issues are contrived just to bilk the government out of more money? That would be an awful way to live for a few dollars more. It is even worse to suggest that the government that sent them to multiple deployments should not help provide for their basic needs or provide post-deployment health care for their service-connected injuries or provide financial support when it was the government that sent them off in the first place. The duty to make them whole is written in statute and continues to be the obligation of the United States.

The legally authorized benefits that veterans have earned and deserve must never be politicized. The payments they receive offset lost wages due to their service-connected disabilities. To deny these in any form is shameful, especially when proposed by the 99 percent who have never worn the uniform of our great nation. Many espouse to be advocates for veterans. Often they shroud themselves in a cloak of nobility and purpose portraying themselves as champions for those who have given all. They take to the airwaves, social media, town hall meetings and election speeches decrying the lack of effort in stemming the tide of suicide. They point out with great vigor the lack of basic mental health care and wraparound services for those who have served their nation and are struggling to readjust. However, when the lights are off, the microphones are put away, and the crowds disperse, they are among the first to say the system is ripe with fraud. How hypocritical and disingenuous.

For the last several years, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has been processing more claims than ever. New legislation that provides enhanced benefits is one reason; strong marketing campaigns and promoting VA provided health care and benefits is another. Almost every month VA is touting another "record" in completing claims for benefits. Millions have been processed over the last few years. The Washington Post suggests that many claims are fraudulent. Yet the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) has prosecuted very few persons because most claimants are not fraudsters. They are not seeking to steal unearned benefits. Like with every system (Social Security, Medicare, and others included), there are those who seek to enrich themselves and defraud the system. These are few compared to hundreds of thousands of claims that are not fraudulent. Most seek only that which was promised. To continue to press the tired, old narrative that veterans are hustlers has been disproven time and again. It is hard to think that those who have lost a limb or an eye in service did so just to defraud the government. What we find interesting is that there has been fraud and theft committed by employees of VA itself who are people in a position of public trust very much like accredited representatives. These occurrences have barely garnered attention. Several employees in a VA Regional Office were found to have been stealing identities and selling information on the black market. Others were recently found to have been processing fraudulent claims for VA benefits, then collecting large sums of money once the claims were approved. These instances made headlines for a brief moment then disappeared from front pages and newsfeeds. *The Washington Post* would have been better served by looking more closely into the theft of taxpayer funds by those entrusted to guard it, rather than malign the honorable service of thousands of veterans, family members, and survivors just trying to make it to the next paycheck.

Convention Committee Report

By Scott Bill and the Convention Committee Team

Dear Comrades and Auxiliary Members,

As we shift our focus to the upcoming Midwinter Conference, we're excited to return to the Marriott Northwest. Check out the agenda, lodging and banquet else where in this issue of the Oversea'r and on the web at www.vfwmn.org.

Make your hotel reservations or order your banquet tickets by December 29.

Banquet tickets can be purchased online at www.vfwmn.org using a credit card—no need for checks unless you are more comfortable with them!

Looking Ahead

We are actively seeking new conference locations across the state and we are finding some new locations. Thank you to those who have given us some ideas for new places. Multiple RFPs are out, and we're awaiting responses to determine which venues best suit our future needs.

Additionally, the team lead by Cheryl is searching for an acceptable location for MN to host Big 10 Conference in 2030. RFPs are out and site visits are happening. More to come.

Minnesota VFW Riders

By Dan Jordan, Chairman Monticello Riders



Greetings,
I want to thank Commander Keogh for this appointment.

Summerfest this year was a great success with a total donation of \$21,500 (\$13,000 from the Monticello VFW, \$5,000 from Michael Heinzer, Amy Hogg's Father, and \$3,500 from the VFW Riders of Monticello. All donations will be delivered to the Children's Hospital on November 13th.

Recently the riders were part of the 250+ people to welcome back the veterans that were on the recent Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.

It was truly an inspiring event, as you could tell by the emotions of the veterans and the crowd, both family and supporters.

On October 12th a few of the riders supported a remains escort mission of a Korean veteran from Andover to Dalbo. A private ceremony was held at the cemetery.

Thank you to everyone for stopping by the table at the Fall Conference. Everyone can look forward to some great giveaways at the Midwinter Conference.

Veterans / Youth Activities

VFW State Invitational Hockey Tournament - January 30, 2026

By Denny Bushy, VFW Hockey Chairman

Moorhead youth hockey association will be hosting the VFW Hockey Tournament Jan 30 through Feb 1, 2026. The tournament will host 8 teams in the boys BAA and girls 15U, and 12 teams in the boys BA level.

I started coaching BA hockey in 1972 in Benson, Minnesota. In 1977 we moved to Moorhead, and I coached the VFW hockey team in Moorhead from 1978 until 2020. I recall how the players were so delighted to make the VFW team. The local post, Albert E. Johnson of Moorhead, sponsored the team. They provided nice jackets and some equipment for each player. They also provided funds for travel and overnights at motels.

I recall back in 1990 when the Moorhead VFW decided to bid on hosting the state tournament. The bids were presented at the Fall Conference and awarded on Saturday. I remember on Friday night of the Fall Conference we would try and wine and dine all the youth activities directors to vote for us to host the tournament the following year. Chuck Loftus was the hockey chairman back then. We were so excited when we finally won the vote to host the state tournament. Back then the tournament was held the latter part of March. We put on quite the show during that weekend for the 12 teams that qualified.

Moorhead has hosted the VFW State Tournament numerous times



through the years and look forward again this year and next.

The Tournament is no longer a qualifying event but instead an invitational type of tournament. Some of the team entered so far are, Moorhead, Forest Lake, Brainerd, Buffalo, Hastings, Elk River, Dodge County, Detroit Lakes, Thief River Falls, Andover, Waseca, Austin, Fergus Falls, Minnesota River, Duluth, and Alexandria.

To follow the Tournament and preview the brackets, go to www.Moorheadyouthhockey.com. The updates will be posted as we get closer to the date.

Jim Hesselgrave, who has been the hockey chairman for this event for many years will be at the event to cheer the teams on and help me with any needed help. Jim has done so much for the VFW State Hockey Program.

Please save the date and come up to Moorhead for a VFW cherished event. See you in January.

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

VFW
VFWSTORE.ORG



NEW! MEN'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY T-SHIRT Navy blue 100% preshrunk cotton. Screened design on back. VFW logo screened left chest. U.S. flag screened left sleeve. Imported; decorated in the USA. **7499 S-3XL \$24.00**

NEW! LADIES' 250TH ANNIVERSARY V-NECK T-SHIRT Navy blue 100% preshrunk cotton. Screened design on front. VFW logo screened right sleeve. Imported; decorated in the USA. **7450 S-3XL \$24.00**

VETERANS UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit www.vfwmn.org for Updates

Archery

2026
Open for Bids

Bean Bag

2026
Open for Bids

Bowling

2026 & 2027
Open for Bids

Cribbage

2026
Open for Bids

Fishing

2025 & 2026
Open for Bids

Golf

2026, 2027 & 2028
Open for Bids

Horseshoes

2026
Open for Bids

Firearms

2026
Open for Bids

Trap Shooting

2026
Open for Bids

YOUTH UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit www.vfwmn.org for Updates

Baseball

August 2026 & 2027
Hosted by St. Cloud

Hockey

Boys Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2026
Hosted by Dilworth #1223

Girls U15A Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2026
Hosted by Dilworth #1223

Veterans Appreciation Snowmobile Ride



The Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association and Minnesota Snowmobile Education and Advancement Fund will hold their 17th Annual Veterans Appreciation Snowmobile Ride on January 31, 2026 in Grand Rapids. The annual ride is provided as a token of appreciation to the veterans who have given part of their lives to serve all of us. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and lodging is provided to the attendees and snowmobiles are available to

those that want to try snowmobiling but do not have one. Others are invited to come along and bring their own snowmobile. All veterans and active duty military personnel are invited to attend this annual event. Over 140 veterans and their family members attended the ride in Grand Rapids in 2025.

**Registration begins
December 1, 2025**

Commander's/President's Project 2025-2026

By Jim "Fatman" Dalziel, Project Coordinator

We are entering our 6th month of the Commanders Project to help pay for the upgrades and renovations that are required of a 92-year-old building. The current family will be timing out soon and it will be time for routine but necessary maintenance.

- New Flooring
- New Window Dressing
- Painting
- Duct Cleaning

We are also helping to upgrade the National Home Resident Convenience Store, purchasing

- Coolers
- Freezers
- And Shelving

This is so the families do not have to travel several miles during the winter weather to help provide the necessary staples for an evening meal.

We are also contributing to the Homes Veterans and Family resource Center. This is to help provide the resources and support to the Veterans and their families during their stay so they are ready leave the National Home.

A common question or statement has been why do I need to contribute to this when our Post contributes to the Home.

Answer:

- This program is going to these items only.
- When working on a 92-year-old house, there will be surprises. With these extra

funds we hope to be prepared for any possibilities.

So right now, you are thinking, how do I support this Outstanding Project.

1. Send your donations from you and your Post directly to the National Home
 - a. "Earmarked" 2025-2026 VFW Minnesota Commanders & Presidents Project.
 - b. Address - VFW National Home, 3573 S. Waverly Rd, Eaton Rapids, MI 48827
2. Online at <https://vfnationalhome.org/donate/>
 - a. Enter Donation and Post / Individual info
 - b. In Comments Section Enter "2025-2026 VFW Minnesota Commanders & Presidents Project"

There will also be a donation spot at Midwinter Conference where we will have info and be able to answer any questions about the program.

District Commanders, the Challenge for which District has raised the most donations will receive the \$200 prize at the Banquet.

Commanders keep collecting those donations. Nothing is too small.

Remember we honor those who gave their all, by honoring the living.

Prepare to be Checkmated

By Ken Schroepfer, Editor Gopher Oversea'r

Edwin "Ed" Albrecht was born in Minneapolis March 22, 1925. He grew up in Robbinsdale, graduating from Robbinsdale High School in 1943. It should be noted that as a very young man, he became interested in the game of chess.

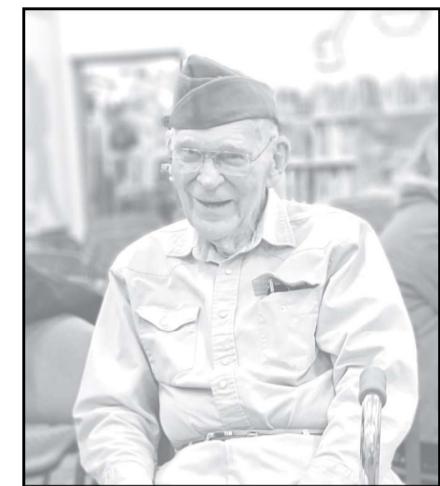
As was required by all young men, he registered for the draft in May, 1943. Ed was inducted into the U.S. Army at Fort Snelling Military Base on July 15, 1943 and sent off the Jefferson Barracks just South of St. Louis, MO. He applied for and was accepted to the Army Specialized Training Program in Fargo, ND for pre-engineering training. This program was closed on March 15, 1944. Everyone was sent off to infantry training.

Ed was assigned to the 42nd Rainbow Division in Muskogee, OK where he graduated from basic training in June, 1944. Some of the graduates were sent off to other units as replacements. He remained with the 42nd and had to receive further training in the use of the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) before the unit was sent to Camp Kilmer, NJ.

In November, 1944, the unit left by troop ship for Marseille, France. Once at sea, everyone on the ship was sea sick. Ed noted that the seasickness passed in a couple of days and that the food was not much to write about. Once they disembarked, the troops were sent by troop train to Strasbourg and then on to Hatten, FR. Operation Nordwind (a continuation of the German attack called the "Battle of the Bulge") forced Ed and his unit to march all night to "straighten out" the U.S. lines.

Several weeks later, his unit had advanced to Hagenau on the Moder River. Ed was assigned duty in a factory and had a clear view of an open field. He observed white clad figures approaching. When they were about 30 yards away, he attempted to fire his BAR. The firing mechanism had gotten so cold that it frozen and would not fire. He wisely retreated back to a command post and was later pulled back to a rest area.

On March 15, 1945 the entire Army front line began to advance toward Germany. It was then that Ed was wounded by a "tree burst" (a mortar shell lightly fused to exploded when it hits a tree branch). He was evacuated to a field hospital, then a general hospital and finally back to the States. After rehabilitation, Ed was assigned as a guard at a POW camp in Hatch, NM (north of Las Cruces).



March 1945 found Ed being discharged out of the Army through Fort Bliss.

Once back in Robbinsdale, Ed took advantage of the G.I. Bill and completed 4 years of education to become an optometrist. While in school, he met and married Loretta Jackelen. They moved to Wabasha, MN in 1950 where he opened his optometry practice.

The family grew to include one boy and three girls. Ed retired after 40 years in 1998. His son and wife both died in 2007.

Ed needed something to do after retirement so he renewed his fondness for playing chess. For whatever reason, he had given up chess in 1943. He joined the Rochester Chess community and began to play twice a week.

In 2011 at the young age of 86, Ed played in his first rated, sanctioned chess tournament. Winter, however, had its toll on his chess game. He would have to leave for home before it got dark so he would forfeit his last games. As he developed some health issues, Ed stopped showing up regularly at the chess club.

It should be noted that at the age of 83, Ed took up playing the acoustic guitar. It was something that he had always wanted to do.

He moved into a senior living apartment at the Augustana Apple Valley Villa where he lives by himself. He plays his guitar for residents of the memory care unit. A long-time friend frequently stops in for a chess game. The guitar rests upright on its stand ready to be played AND the chess table is ALWAYS set up, ready to go.

Be forewarned, Ed always lets you select the white pieces, which gives you the first move, and then begins to distract you as he talks about local events. Before you know it, you are checkmated!

Cootie Korner

By Jarrod McReynolds

Commander of the Grand of MN



Comrades, I hope this article finds you all doing lousy. I can hear your boos, but they only fill me up with joy. I have returned from DC after a great trip with all the other Grands and Supreme for our annual Tomb Trek and Fall C of A. I can tell you from first-hand experience everyone had a lousy time. It was an honor to represent the State of Minnesota

this year while laying wreaths at the Argon Cross. It is always a site to behold, and made even more stoic being in the middle of Arlington Cemetery. I look forward to seeing everyone at Midwinter Conference, until then I wish you the lousiest of holiday's



MN Cootie Grand Commander and the Cootie Color Guard place wreathes at the Arlington Cemetery

Veterans
Linkage Line™
your link to experts

minnesotaveteran.org

1-888-LinkVet
(546-5838)

Timely Tidbits

From Farm to Mechanic

By Ken Schroepfer, Editor Gopher Oversea'r

Earl E. Erickson was born April 3, 1934 in Minneapolis and grew up on the family farm in Sturgeon Lake, MN.

On March 25, 1953, he along with four friends drove to Duluth and joined the Air Force. Earl was sent to Lackland Air Force Base, Texas for basic training and then on to Sheppard AFB, also in Texas. He completed his training as an aircraft and engine mechanic.

Earl was assigned to the 582nd Air Resupply Group where he worked on B-29 Super Fortresses and their engines. In February 1954, the 582nd Air Resupply Group deployed their aircraft along with its Air Materials Assembly Squadron and support staff to RAF Molesworth. Their operational base in England.

The 582nd was assigned to the U.S. Third Air Force and provided the bulk of its air support to the Army 10th Special Forces Group. As such, the 582nd was involved in special operations under the direction of the CIA.

In addition to ground-based repair and maintenance of the aircraft and the engines, Earl had several opportunities to fly as the airplane flight engineer. On one such occasion, the plane left for a 14-hour flight with a 6-person squad of special forces troops and their equipment. After 2 flights over the drop zone, the plane was empty and on its return flight home.

While in England, Earl met and married his wife Ivy. They had a newly baby boy which caused his service time to be extended by 3 months. After 4 years, 3 months and 7 days, Earl and family were back in Duluth.



It was June, 1957 Earl began work at the Duluth Pittsburgh Glass Company where he was trained as a glazer. He transferred to the Minneapolis Harmon Glass Company in 1973. Using his window making skills, he was sent to various locations to do onsite, from scratch, window fabrication. He retired from full-time employment in 1973 and began working part time for United Glass where he continued as a glazer. Final retirement occurred in 1983.

Earl has 2 children - a boy (Wayne) and a girl (Linda). Wayne has followed in his father's footsteps. Both children live near Earl.

Over the years, Earl has restored several vehicles: Fordson Major tractor, 1950 2-door Ford Sedan, 1951 Henry J car, and a 1950 Ford 3/4 ton truck.

Service and maintenance on the two cars has kept Earl busy over the years.

Living on his own, he can be found driving his cars on the streets of Andover and Ham Lake.



Marines from White Bear Lake Post 1782 celebrate 250th Anniversary of the U.S. Marines



Members of Grand Rapids Post 1720 Post and Auxiliary donated school supplies to School District 318 Special Education program.

★ 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.

New Alternative Caps!



The VFW Store will begin taking online pre-sales starting Tuesday, December 2. They expect the orders to be fulfilled between mid to end of the month of January.

Embroidery of these caps will follow the instructions spelled out in MoP Section 803. There is space for only 18 characters. As

a result, they will adhere strictly to the titles and abbreviations for only those titles in the drop down.

Starting December 2, the caps can be found on the VFW Store website at: <https://www.vfwstore.org/category/vfw/uniformcapandnametags>

Free Meal at Target Field

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans, MACV, will hold the 2025 Winter Salute Stand Down & Holiday Meal at Target Field on Wednesday, December 10.

The meal will be served 11am to 1pm.

Participants may enter Target Field from the south entrance. Registration is not necessary. Visit mac-v.org for further questions.

MACV holds the event in collaboration with WCCO and the Minnesota Twins.





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.

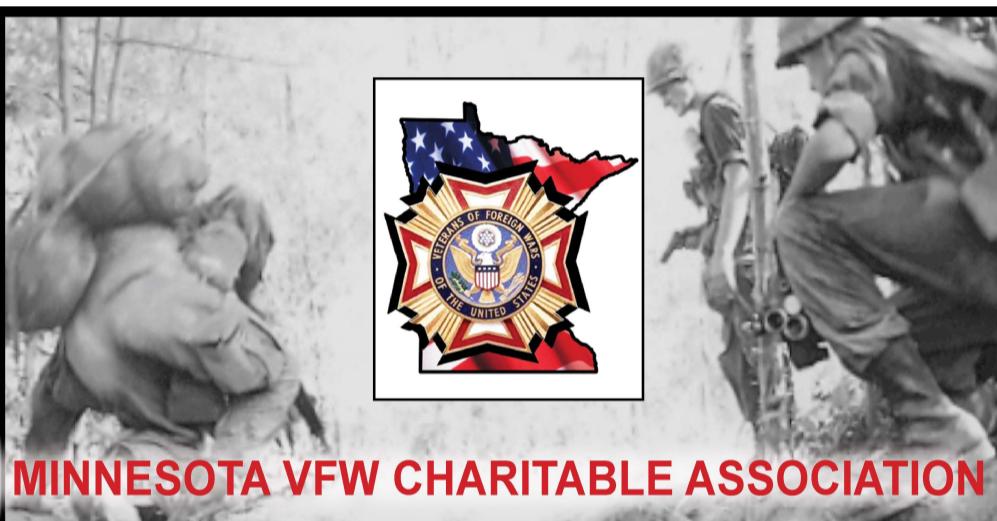
www.veteransonthelakeresort.org

Email: veteransonthelakeresort@gmail.com

Phone: 218-365-6900 Address: 161 Fernberg Rd, Ely, MN 55731



Minnesota VFW members, consider getting a VFW license plate the next time you have to renew your vehicle's license plate. To qualify, you must be a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and, at the time of application, must submit a copy of your membership card.



MINNESOTA VFW CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION

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

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

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

_____ VFW Outdoor Fund _____ Veterans Service _____ VFW Programs

The Veterans of Foreign Wars has been 'fighting' for Veterans since 1899. We have worked endlessly to gain the Benefits and Entitlements that Our Veterans deserve. The members of the VFW have placed their 'bodies and minds' between the enemies of this Great Nation to preserve the American way and the FREEDOM of not only the United States, but other nations as well.

With that said, the MN VFW Charitable Association is asking that you remember this Sacrifice through your Gift Giving and Donations.



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

Using the form attached, Donate to the VFW Charitable Association.

* Establish a monthly or annual deduction to the MN VFW Charitable Association from your checking account or credit card.

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

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

For more information, please contact the Treasurer of the MN VFW Charitable Association at 651-291-1757 or email us at mnvfwcharitable@gmail.com.

Letters and Donations can be sent to: MN VFW Charitable Association, Rice Street Station, PO Box 17146, St. Paul, MN 55117



**SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2026
GRAND RAPIDS, MINNESOTA**

All veterans and active duty personnel are welcome to enjoy a day snowmobiling, including lodging and meals. Bring your own sled or if you don't have equipment, there will be snowmobiles, helmets, and clothing available.



Co-sponsored by MSEAF and MnUSA
Contact Minnesota Snowmobile Education and Advancement Fund
PO Box 28486, Minneapolis, MN 55428
email: mnveteransride@gmail.com
website: mnvetsnowmobileride.org



PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED!

AD rates for the Oversea'r

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

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

How To Provide Us With Your Ad

The Gopher Oversea'r is published electronically on our computers in-house. Our editor imports your electronic file directly into the newspaper. We prefer you to send all ads in TIFF or PDF format.

All necessary font and graphic files relating to the ad must be included with your file. Image resolution needs to be no less than 300 dots per inch (dpi). PDF files, please embed complete fonts (not subsets) and graphics. Please do not enable any password protection or security block when creating a PDF. Convert all RGB or CMYK color to a Grayscale format unless otherwise agreed on.

All ads must be "Camera Ready". If they are not you will be charged an additional forty dollars.

**Before you send us any money be sure to talk to the Editor and make sure

space is available and your Ad meets the requirements above**

The Deadlines for Ads in this years Papers are:

March 15, 2025* July 15, 2025* November 15, 2025*

*All dates are subject to change

The MN VFW Charitable Association 2026 Raffle Calendar is Now Available



This year's calendar features photos of various Veterans Memorials located throughout Minnesota. This is the last calendar featuring Veterans Memorials.

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

Order your Calendars now- Email: mnvfwcharitable@gmail.com or Call the VFW Office at 612-291-1757 to purchase a copy for yourself, contact your nearest VFW Post