

# GOPHER OVERSEA'R

Volume 77, NO. 1

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

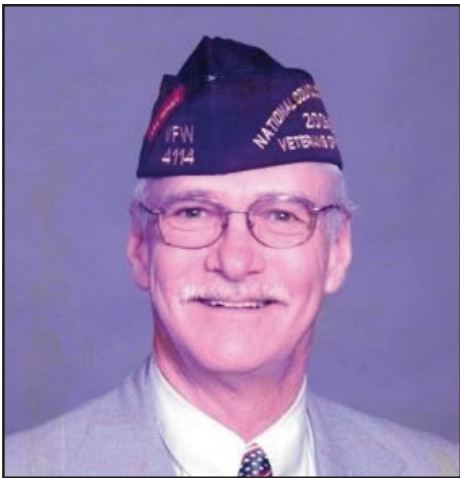
February 2023 - May 2023

**Steve O'Connor**  
**Past Department**  
**Commander**  
**2002-2003**

**State Convention**  
**June 8-11, 2023**  
 By Cheryl Burton, Department Office Manager



**2022-2023**  
**State Commander**  
**Dale Hoogeveen**  
 Member of  
 VFW Post 1791  
 Chaska, MN



Steve O'Connor passed away on January 15, 2023 at the age of 78.

A career military man (1964-1986), he served in Vietnam in the Army Nurse Corps as an operating room nurse. It was there he met the love of his life and now wife of 55 years, Charlotte (Abbott) O'Connor from Leroy, MN. They were married in Vang Tau, Republic of Vietnam in 1967 where they went on to spend their first year of marriage.

While in the Army, Steve earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing and a Masters Degree in Nursing Administration.

Steve joined Hanson-Raabe Post 4114 (Spring Valley) in 1980. He served through the Post chairs and was Post Commander 1991-94. After serving in the District Chairs, he became District Commander in 1996-67. Eventually, he was elected to be the State Commander for 2002-03.

During this time he also served on Governor Perpich's newly formed State Veterans Homes Board of Directors, part of that time as the Board's Chairman. He was involved in the process to get the state Veteran's Cemetery in Preston. Through the years he has been a very active advocate for veteran's causes, serving on committees and lobbying in both St. Paul and D.C.

Our VFW State Convention is about wrapping up business, celebrating our accomplishments and planning for the 2023-24 year. This year, our Convention will return to the Crowne Plaza in Plymouth MN. Upon arrival you can take advantage of a variety of restaurants and shopping near the hotel.

**Wednesday**

For those of you arriving early, there will be early Officers Training Institute (OTI) registration for the VFW, please see schedule. In the evening, there will be a meeting of the incoming District Officers. This is the perfect time for the incoming Department Commander to get acquainted with all incoming officers.

**Thursday**

The busy weekend starts off with

training and learning opportunities for any VFW member interested. The VFW will hold the Annual OTI training where attendees can choose from two classes:

1. Commander's class covering leadership, programs, and procedures.
2. Quartermaster's class details the financial procedures, audits and policies including OMS and Dashboard.

The Auxiliary will hold their Auxiliary Training Seminar (ATS) where they will detail programs, Bylaws and Leadership. That evening, the VFW and AUX Council of Administration meetings will be held to summarize and close any business for 2022-23 year.

**CONV. - Cont. on Page 12**

**VOD & PP Winners**  
**Score BIG in DC**

March 7, 2023

WASHINGTON – The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is proud to announce Siri Corson, a junior at Fillmore Central High School in Harmony, Minnesota, has been named second place national winner and recipient of the \$21,000 Charles Kuralt Memorial Scholarship award in its 2022-2023 Voice of Democracy scholarship program.

Corson was sponsored by VFW Post and Auxiliary 6893 in Preston Minnesota wrote and recorded her winning essay on this year's theme, "Why is the Veteran Important?"

The announcements were made during the Parade of Winners ceremony at the 2023 VFW Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.

March 7, 2023

WASHINGTON – The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is pleased to announce Nolan Green, a sixth grade student from Monticello, Minnesota, has been named the national second place winner and recipient of a \$4,000 award in its 2022-2023 Patriot's Pen essay contest.

Green, who was sponsored by VFW Post 8731 in Monticello, Minnesota, wrote his winning essay based on this year's theme, "My Pledge to Our Veterans."

It is a challenge to write this final article as your state commander well in advance of publication of the Gopher Oversea'r as we have many opportunities in March, April and May to truly impact the lives of veterans and their families. Midwinter Conference was very well attended with the banquet highlighting the weekend as we welcomed our district VOD winners and our state Patriot's Pen winner and their families. It's always suspenseful to hear the VOD winner announced. This year the 1st District again led the way as Siri Corson, sponsored by Preston Post 6893, took the honors.

Thank you for your support of the conference and banquet – the convention committee and headquarters staff work hard to plan our conferences and state convention at affordable prices.

As we returned to our nation's capital in March for the Legislative Conference, Auxiliary President Sonia Tatge and I had the pleasure of escorting Siri at the Parade of Winners where she finished second earning a \$21,000.00 prize. Nolan Green, our Department Patriot's Pen winner, also finished 2nd in the nation earning a \$4000.00 prize. National Legislative Chair Nathan Morgan

**COMMANDER - Cont. on Page 10**

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**Save The Date!!**  
**Upcoming VFW Events**

<b>National VFW Convention</b> July 22-27, 2023 Phoenix, AZ	<b>VFW State Baseball Tournament</b> August 2-6, 2023 St. Cloud
<b>State Convention &amp; Training Schools</b> June 8-11, 2023 Crowne Plaza, Plymouth	<b>National VFW Fall Legislative Conference</b> September 11-14, 2023 Washington, D.C.
	<b>Fall Conference</b> September 21-24, 2023 Kahler-Marriott Rochester

**\*\*Red Events are Department Events\*\***

## Top News

### \*\* Official Notice \*\*

#### Proposed Bylaws & Resolutions

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

**Additional Resolutions and Bylaw changes must be submitted (via postal mail or email) or faxed (651-291-2753) to the Department Headquarters and received no later than 4:30pm May 1, 2023. Bylaws and Resolutions submitted shall be specific and definite as to the Section, paragraph and line to be amended with exact wordings and deletions. Robert's Rules of Order allows Resolution and Bylaw changes to be amended if the amendments are within the scope of the proposed change.**

**The Department Judge Advocate is available to assist with the wording of a proposed change before it is submitted. Contact Edward Keogh via email at [ekeoghvr@gmail.com](mailto:ekeoghvr@gmail.com). Proposed Bylaws and Resolution changes will be voted on at the State Convention in Plymouth June 8-11, 2023.**

#### Bernice Peterson

Past Dept. President  
1985-1986



Bernice Marie (Dauffenbach) Peterson, age 96 of White Bear Lake, passed away peacefully on January 28, 2023 at Encore Assisted Living in North Branch.

Bernice was born in Nicollet County on August 11, 1926. She was raised in the St. Peter area and graduated from St. Peter High School in 1944. She married Ken Peterson in 1946 and moved to White Bear Lake, where she spent most of her adult life.

A dedicated long time member of the VFW Ladies Auxiliary Post 1782 in White Bear Lake, she became State President of the VFW Ladies Auxiliary from 1985-1986. She was thrilled when her daughter, Terri, joined the VFW. Together they attended many meetings and other activities. Bernice worked in the White Bear Lake school system and St. Mary's school as a teacher's aide, and also did volunteer work.

#### Bertha Anderson

Past Dept. President  
1990-1991



Bertha Marie (Johnson) Anderson, 86, of W. Fargo, ND and formerly of Detroit Lakes, MN, joined her beloved husband Clarence "Andy" on December 23, 2022.

Bertha Marie was born April 4, 1936 near Audubon, MN.

She was a life member of the VFW Auxiliary serving as 9th District President from 1983-1984 and Department of Minnesota President from 1990-1991.

Under her leadership, the Department Ladies Auxiliary reached 100% in membership and she was named National Runner-up President of the year.

She was elected to a two-year term on the National Council of Administration for the VFW Ladies Auxiliary in 1992 and served until 1994.

She was appointed by governor Arne Carlson to serve on the Minnesota Veterans Home Board of Directors from 1996-2000.

### VFW Day of Service

[www.vfw.org/DayofService](http://www.vfw.org/DayofService)

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is proud to announce the second annual VFW Day of Service — a dedicated day of service led by VFW members throughout the country and the world.

The VFW Day of Service is an outgrowth of the organization's #StillServing campaign launched in 2020 to recognize the ongoing dedication of veterans and service members who continue to serve their communities. VFW Day of Service, led by veterans and in concert with other organizations and civic groups, is open for anyone to participate. This year's VFW Day of Service kicks off on the first Saturday in May (May 6), marking the start of veteran-led community service projects to take place throughout the month.

Veterans are more likely than civilians to volunteer in their communities, according to recent civic health surveys of veterans.

Studies show that veterans donate to charities, register to vote, and are involved in their communities and local government at a greater rate than their civilian counterparts.

VFW Commander-in-Chief Tim Borland is calling on all VFW Posts and members across America and around the world to join in the VFW Day of Service by planning an activity for May 6, or at another point during the month. Since 9/11, vets like community service projects they can do with their children. Consider making your posts "Day of Service" project a recruiting event as well.

The VFW urges its members and all veterans to visit [VFWDayofService.org](http://VFWDayofService.org) to register their event on the interactive Day of Service map and receive a special participation decal, or find a local event to join and see what other veterans around the country are doing to make a difference.

#### Minnesota VFW Office Locations

##### Department Headquarters:

Dewey Hermanson, 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](mailto:adjutant@vfwmn.us)  
Webpage: [www.vfwmn.org](http://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  
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### GOPHER OVERSEAS'R

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Publications Committee:  
Dale Hoogeveen, Commander; Dan Meyer, Sr. Vice Commander;  
David Staehlin, Jr. Vice Commander; Edward Keogh, Judge Advocate;  
Ken Schroeffer, editor

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

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

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

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

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# Department Headquarters News

## Senior Vice Commander

By Dan Meyer, State Senior Vice Commander

Comrades, I hope you made it through a very interesting winter.

This year has been full of excitement with the most exciting events for me being the VOD and PP at the Midwinter banquet. You can see the thrill of being on stage and waiting for their names to be called. This is one of the reasons we run our VFW programs. We do this program for the kids. It's to help them be patriotic adults or at least that is the goal of this program.

To me another fun and rewarding thing that we as VFW members do is our legislative work in Washington, DC with the National Legislative Conference and at our State Hats on The Hill. With the later, we are helping improve the lives of our many MN veterans and their families. Just by showing up that day you are making an impact on our state legislators. You know, it is more effective to send a large group of veterans to the hill then a small contingency of highly trained individuals. It is so very true that together we can make a difference.

The VFW and its members are not just a bunch of old military people sitting around telling war stories. We are the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We take care of our veterans and their families and our communities.

If you are one of those veterans that need help or just want somebody to talk with, do not be afraid to reach out to someone in your post, district or state VFW. This is what we should be doing. We need to take care of our own.

I do know how easy it is to just let someone else do the work. Yes, life is busy, and boy do I know that for sure! If you think you are too busy to help a fellow veteran, let's visit for a few minutes and compare notes.

But I truly love this "trip" I am taking with the Department of MN VFW. I would not trade this time of my life for anything. Just like I would not trade my time in the military. It was the people that I met both in and out of uniform who made a lasting impression on me.

With that, I hope to see old friends and make new friends at the convention in Plymouth.

## Junior Vice Commander

By David Staehlin, State Junior Vice Commander

As we approach the State Convention and wrap up our program work for the year, I offer my thanks to each VFW and Auxiliary member who made this year a success. Your membership alone helps us fund our operations and our membership numbers help when we work with legislators at the state and national levels advocating for veterans and their families. Did you know that our VFW membership numbers directly impact the funding we receive from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs to cover some of the costs of operating our claims office?

While membership alone is critical, members who are active in the organization add exponentially more value. How can you be a more productive member and help us more effectively service our members, all veterans, and their families? Most importantly, attend your Post or Auxiliary meetings. Review the minutes of the previous meeting. Make and second motions. Speak in debate either for or against motions based on which position you believe is best for the organization.

Serve on committees. Seek and be elected or appointed to office. Different positions require different levels of time and effort. Many positions require just a little of your time.

Vote. Vote on motions and to elect the leaders of our posts, districts, and department. Serve as a delegate representing your post or auxiliary at

the district, state, or national levels.

Learn the basics of parliamentary procedure to be a more effective member. Read Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised In Brief, 3rd edition. This is an easy-to-understand introduction to parliamentary procedure. For improved knowledge, join a parliamentary study group. Two meet monthly. Ask me for details. I can be reached at [david@staehlin.us](mailto:david@staehlin.us) or 651-261-5802.

Here are two parliamentary questions to test your knowledge:

### What is a quorum?

It is the number of members who must be present at a meeting in order that business can be validly transacted. That's the number of members present, not the number that votes on a particular question. In the VFW, the quorum is the number specified in the post's bylaws, but in no case, fewer than five.

### What are the six stages of a motion?

1. A member makes the motion.
2. Another member seconds the motion.
3. The Commander or President states the motion.
4. Debate occurs, if any.
5. A vote is taken.
6. The Commander or President announces the results of the vote.

Thank you again for your membership and support of the VFW and our Auxiliary and for many of you, your friendship.

## Adjutant-Quartermaster

By Dewey Hermanson, Department Adjutant-Quartermaster

We are now at the half-way point of our VFW year. We still have a number of posts that have not paid their assessments – the \$50.00 for the Hospital Program and the \$10.00 for the VFW National Home for Children, for a total of \$60.00.

If you are not sure if your post has paid these assessments, you can always log on to the Department website. Under "Post Resources", click on "Progress Reports". These are the End-of-Month numbers for every post in the Department. You can verify Membership figures, Post Activity Reports, Audits, Community Service Reports received, and the Poppy Report.

These End-of-Month reports are updated by the 3rd day of the next month. Everyone has access to these figures.

**Failure to pay these assessments will result in your post losing its eligibility to vote at the Department Convention.**

Department of Minnesota Bylaws, Article VIII, Section 2 states:

"A delegate registration fee of three (\$3.00) shall be paid by each Post for each delegate to which the Post shall be entitled based upon and shown by the Department Quartermaster's

records as of March 31st. No later than sixty (60) days prior to the convening of the Department Convention the Department Quartermaster shall forward an invoice to each Post showing the delegate registration fees that are due. The delegate registration fee shall be transmitted by each Post regardless of the number of delegates that may be present at the annual Department Convention and must be in the hands of the Department Quartermaster no later than fifteen (15) days (MAY 26TH) before the convening of the Department Convention each year. Posts failing to remit the full amount of delegate registration fees shall be considered delinquent and in arrears, and thus will not be recognized as eligible to vote at the Department Convention. This delinquency may only be removed from the record following the completion of the Department Convention through written appeal to the Department Commander.

**Your Delegate Fees MUST be into the Department Headquarters by MAY 26.**

**NO EXCEPTIONS  
NO EXCUSES**

\*\*\*Department will notify every Post of their Delegate Fee obligation in early April.\*\*\*

## Judge Advocate

By Ed Keogh, State Judge Advocate

The Department of MN Convention is just around the corner. Please represent your post at the Convention and be a voice during the election process. I want to make sure every post is aware of the Dept. of MN Delegate fees per our Dept. of MN Bylaws Article VIII Section 2.

A brief explanation is as follows: Each Post will pay a fee of \$3.00 per delegate. The number of delegates will be determined by the Dept. Quartermaster's records as of March 31st. The Dept. Quartermaster shall forward an invoice to each post no later than sixty (60) days prior to the Dept. Convention, showing the delegate registration fees that are due. The payment of post delegate fees must be in the hands of the Dept. Quartermaster no later than fifteen (15) days before the Dept. Convention. If a post fails to have their delegate fees in the hands of the Dept. Quartermaster prior to fifteen (15) days of the Convention, that post will not be able to vote at the Convention. Paying delegate fees at the Convention is a violation of the Dept. of MN Bylaws, therefore no delegate fees will be collected at the

Convention.

Just a reminder that all posts shall have bylaws per our National Bylaws. You will be asked to show proof of your post bylaws during your next post inspection this coming fall/winter. Anyone needing help creating bylaws can contact me. [ekeoghvr24@gmail.com](mailto:ekeoghvr24@gmail.com) 952-334-2128 call/text. You can find a template to create bylaws on the dept. website [www.mnvfw.org](http://www.mnvfw.org) under Post Resource, Commander's Materials.

I also received questions regarding district conventions. Districts cannot collect district convention delegate fees. However, districts can collect district dues. For more information on district dues refer to the Podium Edition 2023 Bylaws Article IV Sec 406. You can find a template for district dues on the National website [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org) under My VFW, Member/Post Resources, Bylaws: training, forms & Templates, Templates, District Bylaws Templates. If requested, I can send you a template via email.

I hope to see everyone at the Department Convention in June.

# Minnesota Auxiliary News



**STATE PRESIDENT  
VFW Auxiliary**

**Sonia Tatge**

Member of  
VFW Post 141 Auxiliary  
Kenyon, MN



Serving as 2022-2023 Department President this year has been an honor. Every week presented me with new learning experiences and new challenges.

Attending auxiliary and district meetings and events around Minnesota allowed me to reconnect with many familiar faces and to meet many new members that have become an important part of our Auxiliary family. Hearing about all the exciting projects being completed for our veterans has been inspiring.

Looking ahead to the next few months, March gives me an opportunity to honor Minnesota's Voice of Democracy winner Siri Corson during the VFW Washington, D.C. Legislative Conference. All auxiliaries have begun working on those year-end reports due the end of March. Thank you Department Program Chairmen for your excellent information sent to all Minnesota Auxiliaries. District Presidents thank you for your leadership and mentorship. April and May are elections of new officers for 2023-2024 and their installation. All nine

districts have planned for Loyalty Day/District Conventions and some testimonial celebrations for District Commanders and Presidents. Of course, May focuses on the distribution of the "Buddy Poppy". There is still so much to accomplish before the Department Convention June 7-11 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Plymouth, MN. Please get those reservations in soon for housing and for the banquet. Sr. Vice President Dave Scofield is working on the ATS (Auxiliary Training Session) to be held on Thursday, June 8. All members are welcome.

Membership is so important every day! Thank you auxiliaries for working so hard to meet the goals and recruit new members to keep your auxiliaries strong and collect dues from others. Every member matters to keep our organization growing and strong. Numbers matter, especially for our Veterans when it comes to fighting for rights and benefits.

Thank you for your love and support this year. Lastly, thank you VFW and Commander Dale for all your support.

## National District Council

By Frankie Bill, Member Area E

Comrades and Members, we are beginning to wind down the last few months of the 2022/2023 VFW Auxiliary Program year. This invokes excitement for all of us across Minnesota as we look forward to the highlights and recognitions we will soon celebrate at the State Convention in Plymouth later this June. Even more exciting will be watching Minnesota shine on the national stage for the passionate work we do to advocate and elevate all Veterans, their families, and our communities.

The National Midyear Conference was held out of the port of Los Angeles, CA this past January. Key takeaways from the Council of Administration meeting included messages from special guests and updates on the financials covering investments, operating budget, and audits of the National VFW Auxiliary organization. Four (4) resolutions were presented which require delegate votes potentially impacting the VFW Auxiliary Bylaws during the 2023 National Convention in Phoenix, AZ in late July. Additionally, we heard from two (2) candidates who are campaigning for the position of National Guard. Both members are from the Big Ten Conference: Laurie Dale from Minnesota and Sandra Uzell from Ohio. The proposed resolutions and National Line Officer Candidates require all members to have their voices heard and to vote on the progression and advancement of the VFW Auxiliary organization. Are you listed on your local Auxiliary,

District, Department-level, and National delegate or alternate forms? Remember, you do not need to be present to vote. However, check all levels of the organization to make sure that you are registered as a voice to be heard on behalf of Minnesota!

Department Commander Dale and Department President Sonia will host the State Convention in a few short months. They have demonstrated a strong partnership between the VFW and Auxiliary. They will facilitate important business supporting strategic imperatives to further help the Department VFW and Auxiliary thrive, host program and award recognitions, and oversee the elections and installation processes for the next generation of officers for 2023-2024. Thank you for your time, energy, and unwavering commitment in support of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary every day.

In closing, thank you to all of the Auxiliary members for allowing me the opportunity to represent Minnesota on the national level. This experience has been so important as a representative and voice for each of you. My term as Council Member (2021-2023) will conclude during the National Convention. My responsibilities were to ensure Minnesota Auxiliary members were informed on all matters of concern and materials were properly shared from National Headquarters in a timely fashion. Once again, thank you, for this incredible responsibility to be a servant leader of Minnesota and its members.

## Treasurer/Secretary Chair

By Laurie Dale

Meetings are a vital part of our organization; it is where we come together to set our mission into action. We have meetings to share important information, make key decisions, provide updates on projects, brainstorm new ideas, solve organizational challenges and to get feedback from our members. In this issue of the Gopher Oversea'r, I would like to discuss important information regarding local and District Auxiliary Meetings.

### Auxiliary Meetings

- Monthly business meetings are encouraged; however, every Auxiliary shall hold at least ten (10) business meetings per year.
- A change in the regular monthly business meeting date, time, or location shall be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Auxiliary members present at such meeting. Notice of such change shall be sent to all of its Auxiliary members, the National, Department and District Secretaries within ten (10) calendar days.
- Video conferencing or teleconferencing is permitted for members unable to attend a meeting.
- Individual members cannot record (video/audio) any portion of any Auxiliary, District, Department, or National meeting without prior knowledge of the body.
- Five (5) members in good standing of that Auxiliary shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of that Auxiliary.

### District Meetings

- Each District shall hold an annual District Convention in order to elect District Officers and to transact business.
- Each District shall hold at least one (1) stated meeting each year for the purpose of conducting Schools of Instruction for Auxiliary Officers and for the promotion of Auxiliary programs.
- Districts do not issue general orders
- The minimum number of Delegates required to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a District meeting or Convention shall not be less than Officers and/or Delegates representing one-fourth (1/4) of the Auxiliaries of the District. A minimum of five (5) members in good standing are required to constitute a quorum.

## Aux. Nat'l Chief of Staff Visiting at Convention



Sharon Connolly of Ayden, North Carolina currently serves the (VFW) Auxiliary as the 2022-2023 National Chief of Staff/Extension & Revitalization Ambassador.

A Life Member of Dionne-Rumble Post 7227 (Carthage, NY), she joined in 1972 on the eligibility of her husband, Neil, who served in the United States Navy from 1964 to 1970.

Sharon has served the organization in many capacities, including Auxiliary, County Council and Department President.

### MN Auxiliary Office Hours

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

email: [treasurer@vfwamn.org](mailto:treasurer@vfwamn.org) or [secretary@vfwamn.org](mailto:secretary@vfwamn.org)  
Please do not use our personal emails or personal phone numbers for auxiliary business

# Claims and Service Office Report

Jon Gohn, Claims Director

## Honoring Our PACT ACT 'The Most Significant Piece of Veterans Legislation in History'

After years of advocacy by VFW, the Honoring Our PACT Act became law last August, VFW Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland represented the organization at the White House when President Joseph Biden signed the PACT Act into law February 22, 2023.

With the Honoring Our PACT Act now law, VFW's VA-accredited veterans service officers around the world are helping veterans harmed by burn pit fumes or other toxins.

The legislation, considered by VFW to be the most significant piece of veterans legislation in history, focuses on providing veterans who served in countries such as Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq expanded access to VA health care and earned disability benefits.

Kenneth Deist, one of VFW's more than 2,000 VA-accredited service officers, is now actively working PACT Act claims. As the VFW Department Service Officer for Arizona since 2018, Deist sees between 15 and 20 veterans in person each week. The commander of VFW Post 7401 in Chandler, Arizona, splits his time between his offices at the VA Regional Office in Phoenix and the VFW Department Headquarters in Tempe.

VFW National Legislation Service Associate Director Kristina Keenan speaks in support of the Honoring Our PACT Act at a press conference on July 28, 2022, in Washington, D.C.

VFW National Legislation Service Associate Director Kristina Keenan speaks in support of the Honoring Our PACT Act at a press conference on July 28, 2022, in Washington, D.C.

Deist says that as soon as the PACT Act passed, his office was inundated with communication from veterans, particularly Vietnam War veterans.

"They were calling all day, every day," said Deist, who served in 2005 with the Air Force's 586th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron in the Iraq War. "Vietnam War veterans with hypertension [related to Agent Orange exposure] have waited a long time for this."

Deist's wife, Cristina, also is a member of Post 7401 in Chandler. The pair met while serving at Guantanamo Bay. Cristina is a VA service officer as well and is a veteran of both the Marine Corps and Army. Deist, who also served in the Afghanistan War, said claims for

respiratory issues also are on the rise. "We see a lot of sleep apnea problems," Deist said. "The VA has not acknowledged sleep apnea as a presumptive condition, even though studies have shown a connection."

'FREE OF CHARGE — NO MATTER WHAT' VFW Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland said one of the best services that the VFW offers is helping veterans file disability claims through VFW's network of accredited service officers.

"We'll guarantee service is done the right way," Borland said. "This ensures that we help veterans and family members of veterans."

VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci said that, overall, Vietnam War veterans have been the most active in filing PACT Act claims with VFW service officers. He said most of those claims are being filed for hypertension.

"One of the challenges VFW is having is making some veterans, especially Post-9/11 veterans, aware that the PACT Act applies to them, too," Gallucci said. "The simplest thing these veterans can do is talk to a VA-accredited veterans service officer about the PACT Act."

To make it easy to find help with a military service-related disability claim, VFW has a website, [www.PACTActInfo.org](http://www.PACTActInfo.org), which creates a simple way for veterans to file claims. It is a simple screening that only requires a veteran to state his or her:

Name  
Email address  
State of residence  
Location of military service  
Time of military service  
Suspected or diagnosed conditions

"A VFW VA-accredited service officer should contact these veterans within a week to have a conversation about what each needs to do," Gallucci said.

Gallucci added that veterans should trust VFW's accredited service officers because they are recognized by VA to represent veterans in the claims process.

"Being recognized by VA means that our veterans service officers need to meet certain standards and provide services to veterans free of charge — no matter what," Gallucci said. "By law, VFW is not entitled to any money the veteran may receive."

VFW service officers undergo up to eighty (80) hours of training

per year to maintain qualification to represent veterans who file disability claims. The VA requires veterans service officers to attend only 40 hours of training each year.

"In addition, VA authorizes our veterans service officers to have access to their veterans claim file," Gallucci said. "This access allows us to fix a veteran's claim before VA decides on the veteran's benefits. It allows our service officers to advocate for veterans, which goes far deeper than what non-accredited companies claim to provide."

### A Brief History

VFW's formal push to get help for veterans exposed to toxic substances was highlighted in 2021 when past VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II testified before the House and Senate VA committees. He gave lawmakers an idea that would change the way veterans receive disability benefits from VA.

VFW National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray said VFW was the leader in lobbying efforts for the PACT Act. He said that because VFW's Washington Office is on Capitol Hill, advocates from other organizations would attend meetings and planning sessions at VFW's buildings. He added that while getting the PACT Act approved only took about a year and a half, the law covers reforms that have been advocated for a generation.

Past-VFW Commander-in-Chief Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic (2021-2022) stood side-by-side with the likes of comedian and activist Jon Stewart, leaders of many other veterans service organizations and Congress members to champion the bill.

*The entire article is featured in the 2023 February issue of VFW magazine, and was written by Dave Spiva, associate editor for VFW magazine.*

## VA Relaxes Masking Requirements at Medical Facilities

March 3, 2023

WASHINGTON, DC — Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced it has relaxed the masking requirement at VA medical facilities. This update ensures the safety of Veterans while accommodating individual masking preferences and aligning with CDC guidelines.

Moving forward, VA will base its masking guidelines on the VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels (low, medium, and high) and healthcare facilities' conditions. When health protection levels are high, masking will remain required. However, when health protection levels are low or medium, medical center leadership will conduct a facility risk assessment to determine if it is appropriate for masking to be optional in certain areas at their facility. Previously, masking had been required at all times in VA medical facilities, regardless of health protection levels.

"This new policy will ensure the

safety of Veterans and VA health care providers, while accommodating individual masking preferences," said Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shereef Elnahal. "We're trying to be as open as possible to Veteran and clinician and staff preferences alike, while aligning with CDC guidelines."

Regardless of health protection level or healthcare facility conditions, masking will still be required in high-risk areas such as chemotherapy units, acute inpatient medical/surgical units, intensive care units, post-transplant units, dialysis units, etc. Masking will also be required at all times for individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or other viral respiratory infections.

VHA will monitor any changes to CDC guidelines and update VHA COVID-19 guidelines as necessary.

Visit [www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/](http://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/) for more information regarding the VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels.

### 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](mailto:vfw.vbaspl@va.gov)

*We'll Help with YOUR Veteran Benefits*

## Message From Your National Council Member

By Tom Hanson,  
National Council Member

As I conclude my four year term in office as your National Council Member, I feel so truly blessed and fortunate to have had the pleasure and distinction of serving. Representing the Minnesota VFW membership as a member of the Council has been an honor. Sadly, the first two years of the term were impacted by the Coronavirus. But like the troopers we VFW members are, we persevered with virtual meetings and communication through other means. Obviously, these “artificial” means of communication couldn’t replace the face-to-face nuance of a meeting, but it allowed us to carry on the business of the Organization. All in all it appears things have returned to some semblance of “normal” and this lengthy nightmare is hopefully behind us!

I would be remiss if I didn’t once more thank the members of the Department of Minnesota for electing me to represent this great Department. The four years have flown by but what an extraordinary experience it has been. Most recently the National Council was able to meet as a part of the VFW Washington Conference back in March and the final meeting will be conducted at the VFW National Convention in July.

### 124th VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION

Every year, thousands of VFW and Auxiliary delegates gather to represent the organization’s total membership of more than 1.5 million at the weeklong VFW National Convention. While there, our mission is to approve new national priorities to guide our organization as we lobby Congress on issues important to the nation’s veterans, service members and their families.

Convention delegates also elect new leadership, as well as recognize prominent individuals and organizations for their support of veterans and military personnel.

Scheduled for July 21-28, 2023, the 124th VFW National Convention will be held in Phoenix, Arizona.

If you’ve never been to a VFW National Convention the experience is a true opportunity to personally witness the process of how the National officers get elected; to participate in the debate on the floor relative to National by-law changes; and other discourse on the variable aspects of the organization. Additionally, the organization sponsors activities for attendees to keep them as busy as they wish to be. I would certainly recommend all to

# MN VFW Legislative Report

By Nathan Morgan, National Legislative Chairperson

## STATE LEGISLATION

First off Hats on the Hill is a huge event where our veterans have an opportunity to meet with their state legislators. Make sure that you come and join us March 30th at Minnesota State Capitol. Meet your State Senators and Representatives. Encourage them to promote Veterans Legislation.

We are requesting that the State passes various Legislation including;

- A Clean Omnibus bill. Last year was an inaugural year for our Omnibus bill we want to ensure that continues.
- Supporting State funding to MDVA to prevent Veteran Suicide.
- Provide a change to the Homestead Market value exclusion. Increase the \$300,000.00 for 100% VA Compensation disability to \$400,000.00. This also includes changing the percentage from starting eligibility at 70%, to 50%.
- Reduce the cost of hunting, trapping and fishing license for



- service-connected veterans
- Eliminate the two-year rule for Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Recipients. This would assist surviving spouses in applying for DIC and giving them more time to apply.

There is obviously much more that we need to pass, these are only a few of our legislative priorities.

## NATIONAL LEGISLATION

On the Federal level our priorities are the same, we will likely stay with

these priorities until they are passed by Congress.

VFW was on the Hill in March. Our State Commander Dale Hooegeven and our State line officers met with our Representatives in DC. The VFW National Commander Tim Borland testified to Congress requesting that they pass our legislative priorities. One of the major priorities is The Major Richard Starr act HR 1282. This bill would ensure that veterans who are medically retired and receiving VA Compensation would receive the full benefits they are entitled to.

We also discussed the GUARD VA BENEFITS ACT, this is to hold unaccredited VA VSOs accountable for stealing money from veterans who apply for benefits. The best way for veterans to fight against this is to use your local CVSO or through the VFW, American Legion, DAV etc.

We further requested that Congress push the DOD to award service members in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Georgia the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for their service in these countries.



State Commander Dale Hooegeven meeting with Congressman Brad Finstad



State Commander Hooegeven, Auxiliary President Tatje, staff and spouses meet with Senator Amy Klobuchar

attend that are able.

I would like to remind the members too that if there is any matter you’d like to discuss or have brought before the National Council, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with me. This is your conduit to the National Council and your input is essential to your satisfaction with how this organization functions and any changes you believe would be of benefit.

I trust the next individual elected to serve in this capacity will do well and will have the experience of a lifetime! “Later dude!”



## BELIEVET, Service Dogs for Veterans

By Sean Gustafson, 4th District Jr. Vice Commander

After returning from two tours in Afghanistan training explosive detection dogs for Marines, Sam Daly knew he had to help veterans deal with Post Traumatic Stress (PTS). Working with John Sinning, a local veteran, they started Believet Canine Service Partners.

They have trained and placed over 40 dogs, with wounded veterans. It takes 12-18 months and around \$30,000 to train, foster and provide veterinary care to turn a rescue dog or puppy into an accredited Service Dog. Veterans must complete 120 hours of training after they are selected and before they even start training with their dog.

Volunteer foster families provide reinforcement and care for the dogs and puppies throughout the different



stages of their training

“Believet Days” are starting June 9 at various Legion sites, the Forest Lake and Roseville VFWs and the Vets Campground on Big Marine. Learn more about this Northfield, MN 501(c)(3) by calling 507-649-1111 and on the web at [www.believet.org](http://www.believet.org).

# State Convention - June 8-11, 2023



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS - DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA



## STATE CONVENTION

June 8-11, 2023

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

(Rev. 3-21-2023) Tentative

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7

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

### THURSDAY, JUNE 8

7:00 am – 9:00 am VFW OTI Registration  
7:30 am – 8:45 am Pre-Con/Convention  
8:00 am – 8:45 am VFW Mental Health Class  
Dr. Jim Tuorila  
9:00 am – 5:00 pm VFW Conv. Registration  
7:45 am - 8:45 am AUX ATS Registration  
9:00 am – 12:00 pm AUX ATS Training  
9:00 am - 4:00 pm VFW OTI Training  
11:30 pm – 1:00 pm Finance Committee  
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm Lunch  
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm AUX Conv. Registration  
1:00 pm – 5:00 pm AUX ATS Training  
2:00 pm – 6:00 pm Veterans Home Displays  
3:30 pm – 4:30 pm MN Charitable Association  
4:15 pm – 5:45 pm Internal Affairs Committee  
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm VFW C of A Meeting  
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm AUX C of A Meeting

### FRIDAY, JUNE 9

7:00 am – 4:00 pm Veterans Home Displays  
8:00 am – 5:00 pm VFW Conv. Registration  
9:00 am – 3:00 pm AUX Registration  
9:00 am – 11:30 am Joint Awards Session  
11:30 am – Noon LUNCH  
11:30 am – 1:00 pm PDC & PDP Luncheon  
12:30 pm AUX Flag and Banner Practice  
1:30 pm AUX Flag and Banner Presentation

### FRIDAY, JUNE 11 (Cont.)

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm VFW Committee Meeting Assignments  
1. National Security/Foreign Affairs/POW  
2. Bylaws/Ritual/Rules  
3. General Resolutions/Extension Member  
4. Finance/Internal Affairs  
5. Legislative/Veterans' Service  
1:45 pm – 4:30 pm Opening Aux. Convention  
2:30 pm – 4:30 pm Gambling Meeting  
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm Joint Memorial Service  
7:00 pm AUX Council Dinner by Invitation

### SATURDAY, JUNE 12

8:00 am – 1:30 pm VFW Registration  
8:00 am – 11:00 am AUX Registration  
8:00 am – 3:00 pm Veterans Home Displays  
8:00 am – 3:00 pm Silent Auction (tentative)  
9:00 am – 3:00 pm Open VFW Convention  
9:00 am – Noon AUX Convention Session  
Noon – 1:00 pm Lunch  
1:00 am – 3:00 pm AUX Convention Session Reconvenes  
1:15 pm – 3:15 pm VFW Caucuses  
4:30 pm – 5:30 pm Church Service(s)  
6:00 pm – 6:45 pm Social (cash bar)  
6:45 pm – 7:00 pm Banquet doors open  
7:00 pm – 3:00 pm Banquet (limited seating)

### SUNDAY, JUNE 11

7:30 am – 8:30 am VFW Registration  
9:00 am – 11:00 am Reconvene VFW Conv.  
9:00 am – 11:30 am AUX Final Conv. Session  
Immediately after the close of VFW & AUX business sessions Joint Installation Officers  
12:35 am – 1:00 pm VFW C of A

## Banas CIC 2003-04 Visits during Convention

Edward S. Banas Sr., was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on August 29, 2003.

He served in the Army from 1965-68. In Vietnam, he was assigned to the 18th MP Bde and joined VFW Post 10004 in Jewett City, CT. He served in all post level positions becoming an All American District Commander and then Department Commander of Connecticut in 1993-94.

On the national level, Ed has served on several committees as well as a two-year term, 1994-1996, as a member of the National Council of Administration representing the Departments of Massachusetts and Connecticut. In 1998-1999 he served as the Eastern States Conference



Chairman.

Ed is a member of the American Legion and a Life Member of VFW Post 10004.

### HOUSING RESERVATIONS

VFW State Convention 2023  
Thursday, June 8th – Sunday June 11th  
Crowne Plaza  
3131 Campus Drive  
Plymouth, MN 55411

For Reservations call 763-559-6600  
Room Block: VFW State Convention  
Room Rate \$115/night tax not included  
(One bed or Two Beds)

**DEADLINE MAY 12th, 2023**

STRESS FREE ROOM RESERVATIONS  
Use this link at [vfwmn.org/news/state\\_convention](http://vfwmn.org/news/state_convention) then click on  
2023 MN VFW State Convention

## The Wall That Heals Comes to Minnesota



Photo courtesy of Maverick Transportation, LLC in Cabot, Arkansas

This year marks the recognition of the 50th anniversary of the close of the Vietnam War. The Wall That Heals exhibit includes a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial along with a mobile Education Center.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) has announced that the 28th season of the tour began on March 16, 2023, in San Luis Obispo, California and will visit 32 communities during the year. The traveling exhibit honors the more than three million Americans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces in the Vietnam War and it bears the names of the 58,281 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.

Scheduled stops in Minnesota include Mendota Heights (May 26-29) and Monticello (July 20-23).

### Annual State Convention Banquet

Saturday, June 10th, 2023

Tickets \$36 per person

Reception 6:00pm      Doors open at 6:45pm      Dinner 7:00pm

Menu will be available on April 1, 2023

Deadline: Friday May 19, 2023

Please let the Hotel know if you need handicap arrangements or have specific dietary needs.

In order to keep Post and Auxiliary Delegates together, please order all of the tickets at the same time..

Tickets will be available at the Convention Registration Desk

Fill out the form below and return to:

Department of MN, VFW  
Rice Street Station  
PO Box 17146  
St. Paul, MN 55117

**Banquet Reservation for Saturday June 10, 2023 Deadline: May 19, 2023**

Please Reserve \_\_\_\_\_ tickets at \$36 each. Check # \_\_\_\_\_ for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Enclose a check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ made out to: **Dept. of MN, VFW**

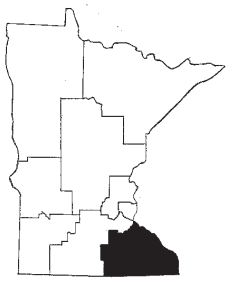
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Post/Aux # \_\_\_\_\_ District # \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Special dietary needs: \_\_\_\_\_

# News from YOUR District Commanders and Presidents!



**Samuel Landon, Commander  
First District**

Comrades,  
We're in the home stretch of the year, the 1st District has had a positive year. A few days after I write this the VOD winner will be announced in our Nation's Capital. The Minnesota's 1st District winner, Siri Corson, will be representing our state and will hopefully she will "Bring It"! If you didn't get to hear her at Mid-Winter Conference, you missed out. Also, Minnesota's Teacher of the Year, Heather Loeschke, is from the 1st District as well and will represent us as well.

At this time the 1st District is at 98.25%. We need 61 members to reach the 100% plateau. With the unpaid/relocate list out, I am confident we will reach the 100% goal, and maybe reach the National Commanders goal of 102%.

Our last District meeting on February 4th was our Memorial Service. Kudos out to all that participated, it was a moving service.

The new Veterans Nursing Home in Preston is scheduled for a soft opening in the spring and will gradually take in patients, while working on a full complement of staff.

Just around the corner will be our Loyalty Day weekend starting off with a golf tournament in Cannon Falls on April 28th, which has always been a good time enjoyed by all. Saturday brings flag raising, meetings, elections, installation of new officers, then ending off the day, a Banquet for the outgoing President and Commander.

It has been a great year so far and hope to keep things moving,

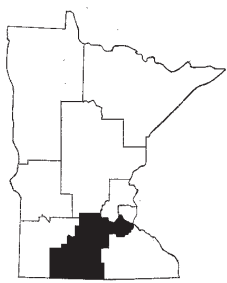


**Sarah Escamilla, Auxiliary  
President First District**

Greetings from the 1st District Auxiliary!

As the 2022-2023 year wraps up, I want to take this opportunity to recognize and thank the members of the 1st District Auxiliary for their hard work and dedication to our Veterans, their families and their communities. Whether by your hours volunteering, collecting donations and by raising awareness to veterans issues you have all made a difference and should be proud of your accomplishments!

Vickie Gleason, 1st District Auxiliary Outreach Chair, recommended we partner with our community for Law Enforcement



**Leon Grack, Commander  
Second District**

As we come to a close on the 2022/2023 VFW year I want to take this opportunity to thank everybody for all their hard work. This year as 2nd District Commander has been an honor and a pleasure.

I have learned a lot and had the pleasure to meet many new comrades. A special Thank You to 2nd District Auxiliary President Keogh for all your assistance and hard work.

I encourage younger members to volunteer for leadership rolls. There are many older members that are more than willing to help you through the process. This is one of the best ways to learn what the VFW has to offer and we need younger members to start stepping up and learning the process. This means the older members need to step aside and guide, mentor, and teach the younger members which I know they are willing to do. Unfortunately we keep losing valuable members before the information may be passed along.

Again, Thank You for a great year.

Recognition Day. We had several Auxiliaries step up to the task and hand out gift bags to their local Law Enforcement who were beyond grateful.

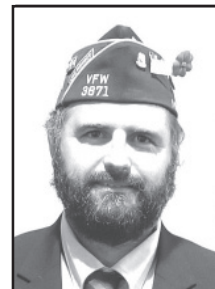
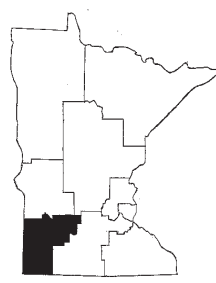
The 1st District also continues to donate funds and hand sewn quilts to the Preston Veteran's Home which is scheduled to open this summer.

During Christmas, we voted to "adopt" three veterans from the Hastings home and gifted each a gift card to use as they wished.

I want to also thank Faye Brown, 1st District Membership Chair, for her hard work in pushing us to achieve 100.05% in membership and thanks to our members for answering her call!

Last but not least I am proud to announce that our very own Siri Corson took 2nd place at Nationals for her Voice of Democracy essay in Washington DC. She is sponsored by VFW Post #6893 in Preston. We have some very talented youth here in the 1st District and we are proud of them all and cannot wait to see who will represent the 1st District next year at both the State and National levels.

Again, I want to thank each and every member of the 1st District for their hard work and dedication and am humbled and thankful to have served as your President for the past year. I hope to see you all at Loyalty Days in Cannon Falls April 28th-30th, 2023.



**Matthew Martin, Commander  
Third District**

Greetings from the 3rd District.

Wow, almost a year as district commander. This year sure went by fast!

I would like to thank my post comrades for the work they have done. I couldn't do it with out them. I enjoyed visiting the posts that I have so far and also attending some of the post meetings. I still plan on visiting the remaining posts. Hopefully this snow will stop sometime soon.

Inspections are wrapped up and I just need to get a few sent in. All posts are looking good. There are a couple of posts that are in need of some work but, we are on the right track. I am looking forward to our district meeting in April.

I had a meeting with the VFW Riders and Cooties to set up a Riders group and Pup tent in the district. We will have more information on how to sign up at the April meeting. My hopes are to have members signing up for these opportunities.

I have learned a lot this year as district commander and would like to give thanks to all my supporting posts in the 3rd District. I would also like to thank our state leadership and other districts for the help they have provided. If we work together problems will be solved. We are one organization and cannot do it alone. It takes our leaders, our members, and our supporters to make the VFW The Best It Can Be.

I am looking forward to the summer convention and getting to know and working with the newly elected department leaders.

Hopefully, the weather will be getting better soon. I ask all of you to check in on your members to see how they are doing especially after these 3-4 day-long snowstorms. Cabin fever is tough for those who are homebound and alone.

Happy Spring!

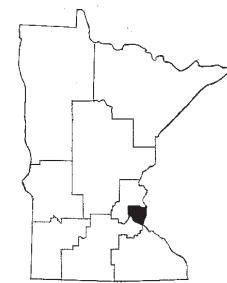


**Jean Opatrny, Auxiliary  
President Fourth District**

Greetings from the 4th District Auxiliary members.

My year as District President is quickly coming to an end. I want to thank the District Auxiliary members for having confidence in me to guide the District. I also want to thank all the officers and chairman and members for all the hard work that has been put in.

I feel that this was a successful year, with the district attaining 100% in membership. I am looking forward



**Michael Lindvall, Commander  
Fourth District**

I want to thank the posts in the 4th District that have gotten above 100% already. Currently there are four posts that have three members or less from becoming 100%. The 4th District has enjoyed two years of 100%. Let's keep that trend going.

To have a growing post is to have a happy post. I know at my post the number of members at our meeting is increasing. It's exciting to see these people who previously served or are currently serving our nation coming in and asking how they can help. Make sure we welcome these new members and talk to them.

Camaraderie is what I miss about being in the military and I know this is what our new members are looking to find. I have brought this up in the past, but it's time to think about going for a position in your post, district or even state. We have members who have been holding a position longer than they may like. Let's get some fresh blood into the system to reenergize things and give some of our comrades a well-deserved rest.

Holding a position is satisfying and makes your experience as a VFW member even more gratifying. Many of our members have served in leadership positions while in the military. Use your capabilities and training for the VFW. For those that wish to increase their leadership skills the VFW is a perfect way to make that happen and build your resume.

So please think about helping.

to reading the year end reports, to see the accomplishments that each auxiliary did.

Please continue to promote all of the programs. Veteran's Day on the Hill(Capital) is on March 30, 2023. Check the March General orders for more information.

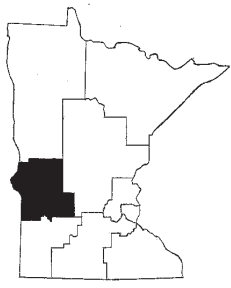
The 4th District Joint Memorial and Convention is April 15 at the Roseville Anderson Nelson Post home. The Memorial is at 8:00 AM and the meeting at 9:00 am. The Department Representative will be Dave Scofield. I would like to see many members in attendance and volunteer to be an officer or chairman. The Department Convention is in early June watch General Orders for more information.

Many posts are having fish fries during the Lenten season. Check out the posts web sites.

Congratulations to the newly elected and appointed officers and chairman for a successful year.

Wishing everyone a Blessed Easter season.





**Michael Gearmann, Commander  
Fifth District**

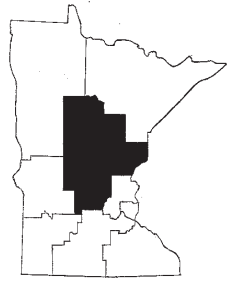
Greetings from the 5th!

I'd like to start out by giving a big "Welcome Home" to Lee Christopherson our Senior Vice who just completed a year long deployment in Iraq with the Regional Support Group out of Brooklyn Park.

Kudos to posts Montevideo, Benson, Ortonville, and Osakis for making 100% membership with Osakis leading the way at 101.43%!

Some good charitable work being done by Willmar VFW Post 1639 includes a donation to the Minnesota Lions Club Diabetes Foundation for over \$4500, and Madison VFW Post 1656 for over \$4000 to the local school for kids activities.

Our next meeting will be at the Madison VFW Post 1656, Sunday April 16th at 2 p.m. It will be ZOOM accessible



**Ryan Johnson, Commander  
Sixth District**

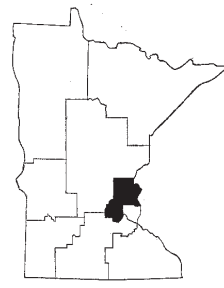
Dear Comrades,

I am pleased to state that District 6 is on the way to reaching our goal of 100% membership. At this time, we need just a little over 30 members which is less than one member per post by the end of the year.

As a district, we are so excited about our district Patriots Pen winner Nolan Green sponsored by Monticello post 8731. Nolan went on to win first place at department and second place at Nationals.

I had the pleasure last month of setting up a recruiting table at the State Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association Conference and interacting with other veteran organizations.

Lastly, I would just like to say that we have had a great year and plan on finishing strong.



**Jarrod McReynolds, Commander  
Seventh District**

The last few months have been exciting for the 7th District.

We are wrapping up programs. The program chairs have been doing a great job. Each and every Post is hard at work recruiting members.

Currently, we have 8 Posts at 100%, and 7 other Posts that need less than 10 to reach 100%, and only 135 new or reinstates for the District to reach 100% way to go!!!

Many of the members from the District attended Don Halverson's 100th birthday, at the Crystal Post 494. The event included a zoom call to Anzio, Italy where many dignitaries wished Don a happy birthday.

The district Golden Dinner was held at Bloomington Post 1296 this year. Thank you to everyone from all over Minnesota that attended.

We had a large group at the Midwinter Conference. The highlight was listening to the winning Voice of Democracy speech. What a great group of intelligent young adults from across the great state of Minnesota.

### DISTRICT MEETINGS

**First District**  
Apr. 29 Cannon Falls #4452 @ 9:30 AM

**Second District**  
Apr. 29 Hastings #1210 @ 8 AM

**Third District**  
Apr. 22 Westbrook #5098 @ 10 AM

**Fourth District**  
Apr. 15 Roseville #7555 @ 9 AM

**Fifth District**  
Apr. 16 Madison #1656 @ 2 PM

**Sixth District**  
Apr. 29 Jenkins #3839 @ 9 AM

**Seventh District**  
Apr. 22 Palmer Lk. #3915 @ 8:30 AM

**Eighth District**  
Apr. 28-30 Int'l. Falls #2948 @ 9 AM

**Ninth District**  
Apr. 29 New York Mills #3289 @ 9 AM

### MOC

May 6 Bloomington #1296 @ 9 AM



**Caitlin Amundson, Auxiliary  
President Fifth District**

Hello Minnesota!

I am going to keep this short and sweet. As this year gets closer to its end, all I can think is "Where did the time go?!"

District 5 has been hard at work recruiting members and working our auxiliary programs. As I write this, the 5th District is just shy of 100% in membership. Our last district meeting is April 16th in Madison with Junior Vice President Karen visiting us.

As always, with the last district meeting of the year elections will be held. I look forward to the important decisions District 5 makes to fulfill that duty. I am so very proud of the members of the 5th District for all the time and effort they put in for our veterans, current service members, their families, and their communities. Thank you for all you do. This district wouldn't be able accomplish what it has without each of you!

I am also looking forward to seeing everyone at Summer Convention! It's always a busy time full of important decisions, highly deserved recognition, and time with other VFW and Auxiliary members. If I don't see you all before, I will see you in June at the Summer Convention!



**Jean Keogh, Auxiliary  
President Second District**

As our year winds down, thank you to all auxiliaries for your hard work in all our programs. Thank you to for supporting and working with your post to keep our presence in the community a united one. Special thanks to officers and program chairs who have led District 2 with confidence, and to all department officers and program chairs who have supported and assisted throughout the last two years.

District 2 membership stands at 98.85% as of February 24. We are only 21 members shy of last year's total. I know that at least 21 potential members are out there. A good place to start is with the spouses of your own post members. Check the eligibility wheel under Member Resources in MALTA for family members. Please reach out to sign them up. Let's work together to get District 2 to 100% by June 30.

Congratulations to these auxiliaries at or exceeding 100% membership: 210 Lakeville, 906 Hutchinson, 950 Mankato, 1778 Wells, 1783 Young America, 1791 Chaska, 4743 Lakefield, 5338 Mapleton, 6202 Belle Plaine, 6208 Prior Lake, 7266 New Auburn, and 9232 Winsted.

Please remember the joint District 2 project, Veterans on the Water in Arlington, when making donations for veterans causes. If you haven't yet made a donation to the joint department project, MACV, there is still time to do so.

It has been my honor and privilege to serve as your District President these past two years, and I thank you for your support and cooperation. I am confident our District will be in



**Doris Anderson, Auxiliary  
President Seventh District**

Hello Sisters, Brothers, and Comrades,

Department Convention is just around the corner. A time to celebrate our great achievements together. Looking back on 2022-2023 the 7th has had a very busy year, taking care of our Veterans, Active Military Personnel and their families, our Communities, and each other. Our programs are completed. We have visited our Veterans Homes, donated time to our communities, invited our youth to participate with our activities, offered scholarships, promoted patriotism in the schools, and donated gardening tools, hats and gloves to the National Home.

Our program year is complete save for membership, which is never ending. Continuing to recruit is the best way to support our veterans.

excellent hands as we move forward.

I encourage anyone interest in securing the future of this great Veteran's service organization to volunteer. We are all here to help each other out, and I trust our current officers and program chairs will have updated their pass-down books to serve as a guide for our new leadership team.

Hope to see you all at our next meetings on March 11 in Chaska, and Loyalty Day Convention in Hastings on April 29.

"Sailing Together to Support our Veterans"



**Amanda Weller, Auxiliary  
President Ninth District**

2022-23 year has went by so fast. There are a lot of programs that have deadlines coming up yet, so we are excited to see the entries.

District 9 has an up coming meeting in New York Mills, with another couple of schools of instructions to be held. Loyalty Days will also be held in New York Mills with installation of officers to follow.

Commander Richard and I are excited to continue to raise money for our joint project PAD. I am truly humbled by all the great auxiliary members I have been able to meet in this district during my visits and district meetings.

I am anticipating great thing in the coming years since there have been changes in the leadership of a couple of our struggling Auxiliaries. The new and some younger members are excited and want to get their auxiliaries back on track.

As we start wrapping up this year, let's concentrate on letting others know what we all do as an organization. I look forward to making new memories for years to come and help mentor others with the knowledge I have gained over the last few years.

Thanks again for a great year!!!

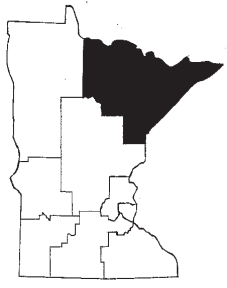


Don't forget to change your address when you head North for the summer.

**Has your post hosted a  
blood drive lately ??**

**If not, why not ??**

**If never, why not now !**



Joseph White, Commander  
Eighth District

Comrades and Friends,  
This year has gone by so fast. I will not be running this year for District 8 Commander. My work life does not allow me to commit the time a commander needs. I will still be active in the state and district.

District 8 has so many great posts doing a tremendous amount of community service. I would like to recognize Gilbert Post 4456 for receiving the honor of growing the most members and receiving a \$1000. There, Commander Tim Mattson is one of our districts most motivated commanders.

Our social media sites are really starting to kick off. Our posts have had a very busy winter with vintage snowmobile runs (Hoyte Lakes), the Int'l Falls commander is setting up a historical Loyalty Days for the district and other posts are having meat raffles, bingos and spaghetti feeds.

Thank you to all the District 8 post commanders for all your hard work. It's so exciting for me to see some of our heritage and history coming back to the district. We have been blessed with a unified district and are ready to go for elections for 2023. With so many volunteers we will have a great Command team next year.

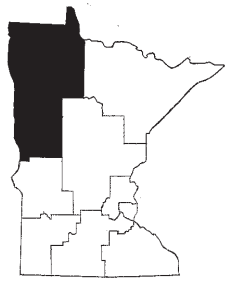
I took command the end of January 2022 and was officially elected in April 2022 by the district. I want to say thank you to all the past commanders who guided and mentored me along the way. Many hours were spent in phone conversations and encouragement. I encourage members to run for these positions. You will have support.

I also want to thank my Sr. Vice Mary and Jr. Vice Tony. We have been a great command team. I have learned it is important to not only surround yourself with great people but to utilize them. They each have a role and responsibilities. As commanders, we should not run posts or the district alone but use our elected officers both past and present.

My words of wisdom to my fellow comrades are the following:

**"It is our Department, it is our District, it is our Post and together we build our Future in the VFW"**

Finally, I want to thank Past Commander Barry Henriksen and his command team as well as our current Commander Dale Hoogeveen and his team for their support. It a great feeling as a commander to know that department staff are there to support you.



Richard Gabe, Commander  
Ninth District

Hello again from the 9th District. Up here in the northwest the day light is getting longer but the snow is still here. It is great to wake up to the early morning sun starting to rise. I'm starting to see smiles on faces as spring is approaching. I'm looking forward to put one big red machine in storage and bring the other big red machine out.

Last fall a group of members from Monticello Post 8731 visited us at our meeting in Thief River Falls. They presented us with the idea of forming a district motorcycle riding group like they have in District 6. A very interesting concept. Scott Koennicke, commander of New York Mills Post 3289, has shown a great interest in getting a riding group started. Because of the size of our district and posts spread apart it could present logistical issues. In true military fashion we will see if it is possible. We will be discussing it at our next two meetings. Stay tuned.

Again, I want to give a great shout out to Amanda Weller for her great work as District Auxiliary President. I don't know where she gets her energy. Must be a secret bottle of something.

As I have said before, if I don't have anything to say, I don't drone on. Just the German in me I guess.

Everyone enjoy the changing of the season. See you at the Summer Convention.



Carol Penning, Auxiliary  
President Third District

Well the winter has put snow in our way so we were not able to go to the VA in Luverne for Bingo several times this winter.

Post 2603 and its Auxiliary were asked to be a part of the Veterans Day program at The Meadows in Worthington. We did a presentation on "The 13 Folds of the American Flag." It went very well and the residents thought it was wonderful! We planned on a meeting night at the Meadows in Worthington with our senior members but Covid put a stop to that. Aux 117 Canby VOD winner took second in State. Great job Canby and Gabrielle V.

I want to thank all my post auxiliary presidents for their support these past two years in making District 3 first in membership. You all did a wonderful job in participating in and supporting all of our programs.

I am looking forward to our Year End Reports. It will be fun to see what has been going on in our Auxiliaries to support our veterans.

## COMMANDER - Cont. from Page 1

scheduled appointments with our Representatives and Senators as we advocated for the VFW legislative priorities. It's always an enjoyable experience to witness democracy in action.

Membership continues to be our number one priority and the Department is doing quite well. Eighty posts have achieved 100% or greater, another 23 posts have achieved 98% or higher and should have no difficulty getting to 100%. At the beginning of the year, I asked every commander to ensure no comrade left the VFW without being asked to stay. I thank you for everything you've done to recruit, retain and reinstate comrades.

I was given the privilege of speaking at the Veteran's Day program sponsored by the 7th District at the Minneapolis Veterans Home. Such a humbling experience gathering in the presence of distinguished veterans – many with physical infirmities – yet they made the effort to celebrate their service and the service of their fellow veterans without regard to the effort it took.

I ask our posts and auxiliaries to continue to be generous with your time, talent and treasure supporting our state veterans homes. You can make a significant difference in the quality of life for the residents and staff. New homes will be opening in Preston, Montevideo and Bemidji later this year allowing veterans in those parts of the state to live near their families and friends. I encourage you to include them with your donations.

It has truly been my honor and an absolute privilege to lead the Department of Minnesota. I offer my thanks to each of the Past Department Commanders who provided guidance and support throughout the year. Their continued involvement will ensure success by future leaders.

National Council Member Tom Hanson kept us informed of business transacted at National Headquarters. It's not a mysterious palace in the sky. Many thanks to my line officers, SVC Dan Meyer, JVC David Staehlin, JA Ed Keogh and QM Duane Hermanson, also to Chief-of-Staff Curt Hermanson for keeping me pointed in the right direction. I enjoyed the support of 9 outstanding district commanders and look forward to seeing them pursue opportunities to serve at the Department level.

To our program chairpersons, committee chairs and members, thank you for serving. Our programs define service to others, the hallmark of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The internal affairs committee, the

finance committee and convention committee play key roles in everything we do.

If you want to influence the daily operations of this department, please consider pursuing election or appointment. SVC Meyer, Comrade Scott Bill and Past State Commander Dave Adams did an outstanding job leading their teams. Special thanks to Membership Chair Gary Carlberg. His position was particularly challenging this year as Commander in Chief Borland established a goal of 102% to grow our organization. I know Gary and I will continue to work hard to the deadline of June 30 to achieve that goal.

State Auxiliary President Sonia Tatge quietly just gets things done – what a talented leader. It was a real pleasure to serve with her. The districts and posts fortunate enough to have auxiliaries certainly know how wonderful it is to have their support.

Post commanders hold a special level of trust within the VFW as nothing happens without the involvement of our 28,000 members. Thank you for all your good work.

Your claims office, led by Jon Gohn, continues to be recognized as the best in the nation providing outstanding service to veterans and their families.

Our Charitable Association recently became a partner with LaMettry's Collision to identify deserving veterans or veterans families who are gifted an automobile – another life changing opportunity. Contact President Ken Schroepfer if you have questions.

The line officers and chief of staff may have kept me pointed in the right direction. However, it's the headquarters staff of Cheryl Burton and Char Guse who determine which direction is the right one. The work they do every day to support our Department is beyond impressive, thank you both for all you do.

To Ken Schroepfer, editor of the Gopher Oversea'r, without whose efforts many of the comrades in the Department of Minnesota would not be informed of all we do, thank you for your patience and perseverance.

To anyone I may have overlooked, your contribution to our ongoing mission is greatly appreciated.

For 2023-2024, I offer my best wishes for success to all elected and appointed leaders of the VFW and its auxiliaries. The work we do is important and meaningful to our fellow veterans, their families, and our communities.

I am proud of what we represent, and I continue to be grateful for the opportunities I've been given to serve.

**Be The Reason!**



Rita Reikofski, Auxiliary  
President Sixth District

Greetings from the 6th District.

I hope you all are doing well and survived the winter. I am very happy to announce that Browerville is taking their poppy displays to National Convention in Phoenix this July for the second year in a row.

Next year we will be doing hats, scarfs, and mittens of all sizes. The

smaller ones will be sent to the national home.

Loyalty Days this year will be in Jenkins on April 29th. The meeting will start at 9am. Keep in mind about running for a district office position.

My President's project is the St. Cloud Stand Down. There will be a purse bingo on the May 12 at 6pm.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at State Convention in June.

# State Contest Winners



State Voice of Democracy Winner  
Siri Corson



State Patriot's Pen Winner  
Nolan Green



K-5th Grade Teacher of the Year  
Cassey Davis



6th-8th Grade Teacher of the Year  
Christine Trcka



9th-12th Grade Teacher of the Year  
Heather Loeschke

## AWARD SPONSORS

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

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

*Sponsored by Monticello VFW #8731 & Aux., Monticello - 6th District*

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

*Sponsored by Prior Lake VFW #6208 & Aux., Prior Lake - 7th District*

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

*Sponsored by Westbrook VFW Post 5098 & Aux., Westbrook - 3rd District*

**K-5th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00**  
**Provided by Fred Babcock VFW Post #5555, Richfield, MN**  
 Cassey Davis, Crown Christian School

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

**6-8th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00**  
**Provided by Fred Babcock VFW Post #5555, Richfield, MN**  
 Christine Trcka, Holy Redeemer Catholic School

*Sponsored by Montgomery Post #5340 & Aux., 2nd District*

**9-12th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00**  
**PCIC John Staum Memorial Honor Award**  
**Provided by Charles McLaughlin VFW Post #906, Hutchinson, MN**  
 Heather Loeschke, Cannon Falls High School

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

"Special Thank You" to Minnesota VFW Charitable Association for their contributions toward the student awards. Fred Babcock VFW Post #5555, Richfield and 3 Diamonds Corp. for contributing to the Saturday's Winners Party.

## Voice of Democracy Winners

**1st place..... \$2,000.00 V.O.D. Scholarship**  
**Provided by the Department of Minnesota**  
**Veterans of Foreign Wars Charitable Association Award**  
 Siri Corson

*Sponsored by Preston VFW #6893 & Aux., Preston - 1st District*

**2nd place..... \$1,000.00 V.O.D. Scholarship**  
**Hugo Matejcek VFW Post #3723, Owatonna, MN**  
 Gabrielle Verheist

*Sponsored by Canby VFW #117 & Aux., Canby - 3rd District*

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

*Sponsored by Granite VFW #428 & Aux., St. Cloud - 6th District*

**4th place..... \$500.00 V.O.D. Scholarship**  
**Provided by Nelson-Schofield VFW Post #4452, Cannon Falls, MN**  
 Brennan Muhich

*Sponsored by Mesaba Range VFW #1172 & Aux., Eveleth - 8th District*

**Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)**  
**Lois Herman Memorial Scholarship**  
**provided by her loving husband Don Herman**

*Sponsored by Roseau VFW #8663 & Aux., Roseau - 9th District*

**Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)**  
**Provided by Charles McLaughlin VFW Post #906, Hutchinson, MN**  
 Julianna Kunz

*Sponsored by A.R. Patterson VFW #7, Forest Lake - 7th District*

**Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)**  
**Provided by Fred Babcock VFW Post #5555, Richfield, MN**  
 Kia Matt

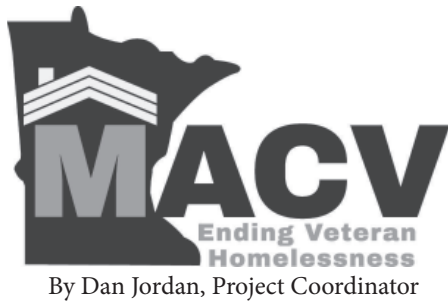
*Sponsored by Starbuck VFW #4582 & Aux., Starbuck - 5th District*

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

*Sponsored by Mapleton VFW #5338, Mapleton - 2nd District*

**Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)**  
**Provided by Fred Babcock VFW Post #5555, Richfield, MN**  
 Landon Wahlquist

*Sponsored by Woodbury VFW #9024 & Aux., Woodbury - 4th District*



Greetings,  
To date, we have raised a total of \$73,858.00 for MACV. Absolutely outstanding !!

Every year that I have been the Commander's Project Coordinator, I have hoped that this year would raise more funds and outdo the previous year. It is with your generous donations that this has been accomplished.

Our State Convention is coming up. This is the final push! With the help of you and

your posts, we should be able to pass the \$100,000 mark.

There are a lot of groups/organizations that will help with your fund raising efforts if your post does not have a gambling fund.

I close by saying that it has been an honor and privilege to have served in this position for three of the last five years.

Look forward to seeing you at the Convention and the Parade of Checks at the banquet.

## Veterans Appreciation Snowmobile Ride 2023



The MN Snowmobile Education & Advancement Fund along with MN United Snowmobilers Association held their 15th annual ride on January 14, 2023 in Bemidji, MN. Guides from local snowmobile clubs providing guided rides to 149 veterans & guests. The length of the rides varied from 70-125 miles with many stopping at the Mississippi River headwaters.

Veterans were provided with

a hotel room, meals and clothing and snowmobiles if necessary. During the banquet, a discussion was held on the importance of seeking help when needed and how veterans can get that help.

Thank you to volunteers from the North County Snowmobile Club, Clearwater Trail Blazers and the Warren Sno-Cat Riders as well as Polaris and Artic Cat for making this event possible.

## Michas Ohnstad, Man of Many Uniforms

Michas Ohnstad, born August 14, 1926, was the youngest of four siblings. A Hinkley High School graduate in 1944, he was drafted and joined the Army at Ft. Snelling. After armored basic training at Ft. Knox, KY, and stops in Hawaii, Manila and Luzon he received orders to join the Atomic Bomb Commission after the US bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Then came a stint on the USA Typhus Commission and assignment to General MacArthur's headquarters both in Tokyo. Rank at discharge - T5.

Much has happened since his military service. Michas has been a social worker, teacher, and clergyman as well as being elected to the State House of Representatives for District 19A



from 1973 to 1974.

He and his wife Alma have four children. A member of North Branch Post 6424, he is very involved in the American Legion and various other veterans efforts.

He lost his wife Alma a few years ago.

## CONV. - Cont. from Page 1

### Friday

First thing in the morning of the Convention we celebrate the accomplishments of our organization at the Joint Awards Session. Find out who excelled in all the great VFW programs. Special awards will be announced including All-State Post Commanders and All-State Post Quartermasters. Special awards will also be announced for the Auxiliary Hospital Volunteer of the Year.

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

### Saturday

The VFW and AUX Conventions head into full swing, conducting

the official business of their organizations. This will include nominations for 2023-24 State Officers and discussion of Bylaw proposals for the upcoming year as well as National Bylaws and Resolutions. Decisions made at these meetings will not only direct our organization locally but guide our State Officers as they head to the National Convention in July. The Annual Silent Auction will be held in the Main Lobby from 8 am to 3 pm (still tentative).

The Banquet Menu will be available April 1, 2023. There is limited seating for this banquet as the room capacity is 280 people. First come, first served.

### Sunday

The end to a busy Convention, we will conclude with the elections of VFW and AUX Officers that will lead us into the New Year. The Officers will be installed immediately after the Convention Sessions. Please attend and support the 2023-24 State Commander and State President joint reception. The Joint Reception TBD.

## A Veteran's Veteran Donald D. Hempel

1930-2023

by Matt Martin, District 3 Commander

Donald Dell Hempel was born April 27, 1930. He enlisted in the Army in January 1949, at the age of 18. Don was honorably discharged twelve months later.

In September, 1950 he was called back into service and was sent to Korea. Don served in the Seventh Infantry Regiment, Third Division as a 30-caliber machine gunner. In November, the Chinese entered the war. His outfit fought their way to the Chosin Reservoir at the North Korean-Manchurian border. In December they were evacuated. Christmas Eve they were onboard a ship sailing to Pusan near Seoul.

Don was honorably discharged in July, 1951. Don's service to our country continued even after his discharge.

He moved to Minnesota and married Shirley Jenson on February 23, 1952 and made their home in Granite Falls. Don joined and became a lifetime member of VFW Post 3871 and Legion Post 69 in Granite Falls as well as the DAV.

Don never served as a post commander. But he was a true leader in these organizations.

He loved the VFW. Don was an active Honor Guard member until July, 2022 when he fell and began to have health issues.

When active as an Honor Guard member, Don fired his M1. No matter the weather, from humid 99+ to frigid double-digit below zero, Don was always there for every funeral or event bestowed upon the Honor Guard. He was the contact person for Honor Guard duties.



He was the first to arrive, the last to leave and ready to help at all VFW and Legion meetings.

His dedication was not dependent on recognition but solely for his fellow veterans. Even so, Don has received appreciation awards for his service. If you talked to Don, he would tell you he didn't deserve such recognition, but was privately proud.

Don was not only dedicated to the posts, he was also dedicated to his role as husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He loved his family, his fellow veterans, his community and his country.

I decided to write this piece about Don to thank him, to express my deep gratitude and to show the need for more members like Don.

Thanks to you Don and to all members like you, for your many, many years of service and dedication to these great organizations. We cannot do it without you.

## Veterans / Youth Activities

### The State of Hockey Monticello and Elk River take top Honors

by Jim Hesselgrave, VFW State Hockey Chairman

The VFW State Invitational Bantam Hockey Tournament continued the “new” tradition by inviting both ‘A’ and ‘AA’ Teams sponsored by Minnesota VFW Posts.

The 2023 VFW Invitational Tournament was hosted by Elk River – Rogers VFW Post 5518 at the Elk River Furniture and Things Community Event Center on March 10 – 12, 2023.

**Friday, March 10th** started with eight games, four in the Kiser Arena and four in the Cornerstone Arena:

Game 1A (Kiser) – Warroad, sponsored by VFW Post 4930 played Cambridge-Isanti, sponsored by VFW Post 2735. Cambridge-Isanti found themselves outgunned by one of the best A Bantam Teams in the State. The game ended with the win going to Warroad 8 – 1.

Game 1AA (Cornerstone) – Elk River, sponsored by VFW Post 5518 faced Waseca, sponsored by VFW Post 1642. This well played game by both Teams resulted in Elk River holding onto their slim one-point lead

Lake, sponsored by VFW Post 4210. A great game. Alexandria held on to win 3 – 2.

Game 4A (Kiser) – Moorhead, sponsored by VFW Post 1223 took on Thief River Falls, sponsored by VFW Post 2793. Moorhead skilfully beat their northern rival 7 – 1.

Game 4AA (Cornerstone) – Brainerd, sponsored by VFW Post 1647 matched up with Buffalo, sponsored by VFW Post 8731. After six minutes of overtime, Buffalo won 3 – 2.

On Friday night, the players, coaches and family members were treated to a lasagna dinner in the Field House of the Furniture and Things Community Event Center. Rockwood Event Center, a VFW Partner, catered the event that served about 730 guests. The food was Great! State VFW Auxiliary Member Melody Shryock was the emcee. She kept the Program moving and made sure that everyone had a FUN time. Dinner guests included



**Monticello 2023 VFW State Invitational ‘A’ Bantam Hockey Tournament Champions** sponsored by **Monticello VFW Post 8731**

and advancing to the Championship side winning 2 - 1.

Game 2A (Kiser) – Monticello, sponsored by VFW Post 8731 met Andover, sponsored by VFW Post 9625. Andover met a team that was determined to head for the Minnesota Hockey State Tournament title. Monticello prevailed 10 – 2.

Game 2AA (Cornerstone) – Rochester, sponsored by VFW Post 1215 challenged St. Cloud, sponsored by VFW Post 428. Rochester reinforced their high state ranking with a 7 – 0 victory.

Game 3A (Kiser) – Elk River, sponsored by VFW Post 5518 welcomed Minnesota River, sponsored by VFW Post 1803. Elk River was tenacious as they sent Minnesota River to the Consolation side of the tournament with the win 3 – 0.

Game 3AA (Cornerstone) – Alexandria, sponsored by VFW Post 936 faced a north metro team, Forest

State Commander Dale Hoogeveen, Elk River Mayor John Dietz and Elk River – Rogers VFW Post Commander Dave Boily.

**Saturday – March 11th:**

Game 5A (Cornerstone) – Elk River played Warroad. Warroad, seeded number one, had their hands full with a very determined Elk River team. With less than a minute remaining in overtime, Warroad scored a goal and went to the Championship Game with a 2 – 1 win.

Game 5AA (Kiser) – Elk River faced a very confident Buffalo team. With the game tied 1 – 1, it went into two overtimes! With less than five minutes left in the second Overtime, Elk River scored and moved into the Championship Game with a victory 2 - 1.

Game 6A (Cornerstone) – Andover faced off against Thief River Falls. After some hard skating by Andover, Thief River Falls moved

### VETERANS UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit [www.vfwmn.org](http://www.vfwmn.org) for Updates

**Archery**  
2023 & 2024  
*Open for Bids*

**Bean Bag**  
2023 & 2024  
*Open for Bids*

**Bowling**  
March 25-26 and April 1-2, 2023  
Hosted by South St. Paul #295

**Cribbage**  
2023 & 2024  
*Open for Bids*

**Trap Shooting**  
2023 & 2024  
*Open for Bids*

**Fishing**  
2023 & 2024  
*Open for Bids*

**Golf**  
August 4-6, 2023  
August 9-11, 2024  
August 1-3, 2025  
Hosted by Coon Rapids #9625

**Horseshoes**  
2023 & 2024  
*Open for Bids*

**Pistol**  
2023  
Cancelled

### YOUTH UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit [www.vfwmn.org](http://www.vfwmn.org) for Updates

#### VFW STATE BASEBALL VFW STATE HOCKEY



**August 2-6, 2023  
State Tournament**  
Hosted by St. Cloud  
Eastside #4847

**Boys Bantam Invitational  
State Tournament  
March xx-xx, 2024**  
*Open for Bids*

**Girls under 15 Invitational  
State Tournament  
March xx-xx, 2024**  
*Open for Bids*



**Elk River 2023 VFW State Invitational ‘AA’ Bantam Hockey Tournament Champions** sponsored by **Elk River-Rogers VFW Post 5518**

into the Consolation Championship Game. Thief River Falls won 4 – 2.

Game 6AA (Kiser) – St. Cloud faced Forest Lake. St. Cloud tried but they failed keep up with an aggressive Forest Lake team. Forest Lake goes onto the Consolation Championship Game. Final score was 6 – 0.

Game 7A (Cornerstone) – Monticello continued their quest for Gold in a game with Moorhead. Monticello won the game 6 – 1 and goes into the Championship Game with Warroad.

Game 7AA (Kiser) – Rochester

faced a tough Alexandria team. This was a great game and Rochester sends Alexandria to the Third Place Game with a 2 – 1 win.

Game 8A (Cornerstone) – Minnesota River looked to stay in the tournament by defeating Cambridge-Isanti. Minnesota River put Cambridge-Isanti on the boards with a hard fought game. In the end, Minnesota River took the decision and the game 4 – 2.

Game 8AA (Kiser) – Waseca faced a very determined Brainerd team. The two teams exchange goals.

**HOCKEY - Cont. on Page 14**

## VFW National Home

By Thersa Shumway

Greetings from the National Home.

When you donate, you'll empower us to provide families with housing for up to four years, professional counseling, life skills classes, and a variety of educational, recreational and enrichment opportunities. Donate through your post Gambling Fund or make a personal donation that will be tax deductible. Thanks for your continuing support.

### HOCKEY - Cont. on Page 13

It was anyone's game. It turned into a goaltenders game. Waseca prevailed with a 2-1 win and sent them on to the Consolation Championship Game.

#### Sunday – March 12th:

'A' Consolation Game – Thief River Falls played Minnesota River. Both teams exchanged goals in the first period, score 1-1. The Second Period was scoreless, but filled with penalties. In the Third Period, Minnesota River found the back of the net twice. Minnesota River takes home the 'A' Bantam Consolation Trophy with a win 3 – 1.

'AA' Consolation Game – It was obvious, Waseca wanted the win over a determined Forest Lake team. Forest Lake was held scoreless until the third period. Waseca left the arena with the 'AA' Consolation Championship over Forest Lake 7 – 2.

'A' Third Place Game – Moorhead faced off against a strong Elk River team. It was a hard fought contest. Moorhead scored twice in the first period. Elk River returned the favor with two goals in the second period. Neither team scored a goal in the third period. The game tied 2-2 then went into overtime. With only one second left in the second overtime, Moorhead stuffed the puck past the Elk River goaltender. The game ended 3 – 2 with Moorhead taking the 'A' Third Place.

'AA' Third Place Game – Buffalo faced-off with Alexandria for Third Place. At the end of the first period, the game was tied 1 – 1. Alexandria scored once in the second period. The score was now 2-1. Alexandria scored twice in the third period. Alexandria went home with the 'AA' third place trophy home. Score 4 – 1.

'A' Championship Game – At the beginning of this tournament, the top seeded teams were Warroad and Moorhead. Unexpectedly, it was Monticello vs Warroad. In the first period, Monticello jumped out to a two goal lead. In the second period, both teams scored goals. It ended with a score of Monticello leading 4 - 3. The third period, a flurry of goals were scored by both sides. With about three minute left in the game, Warroad scored yet another goal to tie it up at 6 – 6. The first ten minute overtime played out with no penalties and no score. Two minutes into the second overtime, Monticello found the back of Warroad's net to win the Game. Final score was 7 – 6. Monticello became the VFW State Invitational 'A' Bantam Hockey Tournament Champion – 2023!

'AA' Championship Game – Initially, it looked as if this would be a battle between Rochester and

Buffalo. However, Elk River looked to be the hot team against number one seeded Rochester. So far, both teams had excellent goaltending. After three periods of EXCELLENT HOCKEY, the Game was tied 0-0!!! Throughout the first ten-minute overtime, each net-minder kept their team in the Game. At the beginning of the second overtime, each coach tried to put their best lines on the ice to close out and win the game. The second overtime started out looking a lot like the previous fifty-five minutes of Hockey. Neither goaltender was going to give up a goal. With about three minutes left in the second overtime, Elk River's Grant Schauer (#8) scored a 'garbage' goal to win it! Elk River eeked out a 1-0 victory over Rochester. An absolutely outstanding end to a great tournament!!! Elk River is the VFW STATE INVITATIONAL 'AA' Bantam Hockey Champion – 2023!

Thanks go out to the players, coaches and parents for making the 2023 VFW State Invitational Hockey Tournament a HUGE SUCCESS!

Secondly, we would like the VFW posts throughout the state that have made a 'solid' commitment to sponsor these Bantam Hockey Teams. Without their Sponsorship – the VFW Hockey Program would not exist.

A special thank you to VFW State Commander Dale Hoogveen for spending the weekend with us. It made a huge impact on the Elk River Community. We are very grateful to Dale for his time and dedication to the VFW Bantam Hockey Program and the VFW State Tournament.

On Sunday, we were honored to have the Minnesota Veterans Color Guard join us as they presented the colors at all six games.

Most of all, we would like THANK Elk River – Rogers VFW 5518 Post Commander Dave Boily and the dozen or so VFW volunteers from his Post. A very special thank you to Jeb Kotzian of Post 5518 for his dedication to detail and his knowledge of hockey. Without the dedication and commitment to details, a successful tournament would not have happened.

Tournaments like this are only successful because of the people behind the scenes: Elk River Mayor John Dietz, the Elk River Youth Hockey Association, the Elk River 'A' and 'AA' Bantams and the local Sponsors/Advertisers. Lastly, a very special thank you to Tim Dalton, Supervisor and his staff at Furniture and Things Community Event Center.

## Minnesota VFW Riders

By Todd "Tiny" Roberts



Comrades and Auxiliary members,

It has been challenging but great fun to be working as the VFW Riders Chairperson but the work is not done.

The membership is still growing and we are getting closer to adding groups in several areas of Minnesota. I am very proud of the work all the members are doing for recruiting and expanding the VFW Riders.

Our mission is still to serve our veterans and help the VFW in any way possible.

The weather is finally warming up. This will bring the motorcycles out on the road. They will be out there getting involved with many different rides and fundraisers.

This is something most people never think about when they see a very large group of motorcycles with people stopping traffic on a Saturday. These groups are out there spending large amounts of money, out of their pocket, on silent auctions, fees to

be on the ride, and just making a donation to whatever that ride is trying to support.

Think about that when you hear about the VFW Riders talking about themselves hosting a ride, organizing a ride, or planning to attend a ride. So many of the rides the VFW Riders attend and associate with are raising money for veterans.

I am happy to see Monticello is planning two rides this year again for the sixth year in a row,

Blessing of the Bikes is on May 20th and the SummerFest Ride will be on August 19th.

We are planning for the first ever Ride to State Convention this June. The VFW Riders are hoping to show the Department that we are a valid entity of the VFW.

Details for this ride will be posted and hopefully in the May General Orders. Thank you all for supporting this program.

## Cootie Korner

By Len Gudmunson

Commander of the Grand of MN

As my year as the Head of this crummy organization comes to an end, I wish to thank all of the Cooties for their support and non-help. It has been an honor to represent you when dealing with the Supreme and other Grands. I've had two highlights that made this year memorable. First was Tomb Trek, the first weekend in November. At this function we gather in Washington D.C. and lay wreaths at the "Black Jack" Pershing grave site, in Arlington National Cemetery. A total of 400 wreaths were presented by all the Grands and Auxiliary. We also had business to do and teaching about the new hospital reporting system. Second was my first trip to the National Home in Eaton Rapids, MI. The first weekend in December the Grand of Michigan has "Cootie Christmas" there. The Cooties sponsor food, fun and gifts for the families that call the campus home. The National Home has 42 single-family homes on the Campus. Currently, there are six unoccupied homes. A family can stay there for four years rent free so that they can get back on their feet. If you have never been there, try to include it during your vacation. This year has been a difficult one in that we have had four Pup Tents turn in their Charters: Roseau, Breckenridge, Blaine and Spring Lake Park. On the plus side we started Pup Tent 46 "Yellow Brick Roadies" in Chaska and are close to having enough Cooties for a Pup Tent in Granite Falls. We will be having our Convention on May 6th at VFW Post 1296 in Bloomington. At that time we will elect a new slate of officers. If you are a Cootie please make every effort to attend and make your presence known.

KEEP THEM SMILING

IN BEDS OF WHITE

## Timely Tidbits

### Don Halverson Still Going Strong at 100

Legacy Life member Donald "Don" Halverson celebrated his 100th birthday on February 24, 2023, with a gala party at his home post, Charles R. Knaeble VFW Post 494 in Crystal, MN.



One of seven children, Don grew up in south Minneapolis near Minnehaha Falls. During the Depression, he worked on area farms until graduating in 1942. He was drafted into the Army in 1943.

Following training at Camp Blanding in Florida and Camp Robinson in Arkansas he deployed to Europe on a Liberty Ship. Arriving in Naples, Italy in October 1943, he was assigned as a replacement to the 34th Infantry Division, the "Red Bulls". This National Guard unit was mobilized in 1941, composed of men from the Dakotas, Iowa, and Minnesota.

Don served as a Technical Sergeant, assigned as Platoon Sergeant of a weapons platoon with machine guns and mortars. The Red Bulls fought on the German Winter Line near Salerno and the Volturno River in November and December of 1943. When they broke through, the unit the fought along the Gustav Line. It was during this time that Don's platoon was involved in assaults on Monte Casino where his platoon lost 35 of 37 men. After Monte Casino, his unit was sent to Naples to rebuild.

Don's next assignment was on the Anzio beachhead, behind German lines from March to June, 1944. While there, his unit was subjected to fierce bombardment from two German rail guns named "Anzio Annie" and the "Anzio Express".

He took part in the liberation of Rome, fought along the German Gothic Line, and then the Po Valley. Don's combat performance earned him a battlefield promotion to Second Lieutenant. It would have meant leaving his platoon, so he turned it down.

In 1947, after the war Don met and married his sweetheart, Bernice

Lind. Together, they raised two boys and a girl. Don is now blessed with 7 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild.

He has lived in the same house in Brooklyn Park since 1959 and worked at Downtown Chevrolet for 35 years. Don has been an active VFW member for 75 years.

On Friday May 8, 2020, Don, along with six fellow WWII veterans, were flown to Washington, DC for a ceremony at the WWII Memorial celebrating the 75th anniversary of the ending of WWII in Europe. President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump participated in a wreath-laying ceremony and then thanked each veteran for their service.

Even now, he is an active bowler, gardener, enjoys hiking and watching his Vikings and dancing. If the band plays a Polka, you'll find him on the dance floor!.

## ★★ WANTED ★★

Photos, captions and articles  
honoring our Century Veterans

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

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

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

Photos will be returned upon request.

## WORD SEARCH #14

### 20 Largest Lakes in Minnesota

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

Find the following words in the puzzle.

Words are hidden and .

BIG STONE  
BOWSTRING  
CASS  
KABETOGAMA  
LAKE OF WOODS  
LEECH  
MILLE LACS

MINNETONKA  
NAMAKAN  
OTTER TAIL  
PELICAN  
PEPIN  
RAINY  
SAGANAGA

SUPERIOR  
TRAVERSE  
UPPER RED  
VERMILLION  
WHITEFISH CHAIN  
WINNIBIGOSHISH

# Metro Poppy Days



Order Now!! There is still time to place your post's poppy order for 2023.

Poppy days are:

**May 20-21, 2023**

## REMEMBER OUR FALLEN



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS



Photo credit Dewey Hermanson



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(546-5838)

*Looking for a Program that's Educational AND Entertaining?*

### Fundraising for THE BOYS OF '61!

Minnesota's Civil War Veterans Memorial

If you are looking for program opportunities for special events at your Post, consider having Historical Experiences bring a history program to your membership.



These entertaining programs are educational and patriotic. You can choose from a number of topics including:

- The Continental Soldier in the American Revolution**
- The Soldier of the American Civil War**
- The American Doughboy of WWI**
- The GI of WWII**
- The GI in the Korean Wars**
- The Grunt in Vietnam**
- Operation Overlord: The Normandy Invasion**
- The First Minnesota Regiment at Gettysburg and MORE!**

The cost of each program is a \$600 donation to the BOY'S OF '61, plus mileage to your post and back from the speaker's residence in Mankato, MN. (Current IRS mileage rate is \$.545 per mile.) This fee will be donated to the BOY'S OF '61, which is Minnesota's memorial to the men from this state who went off to war to save the Union. The BOY'S OF '61 is a non-profit organization dedicated to the building of a memorial to all of Minnesota's Civil War veterans. For more information on programming to go to the website at...

[historicalexperiences.org](http://historicalexperiences.org)

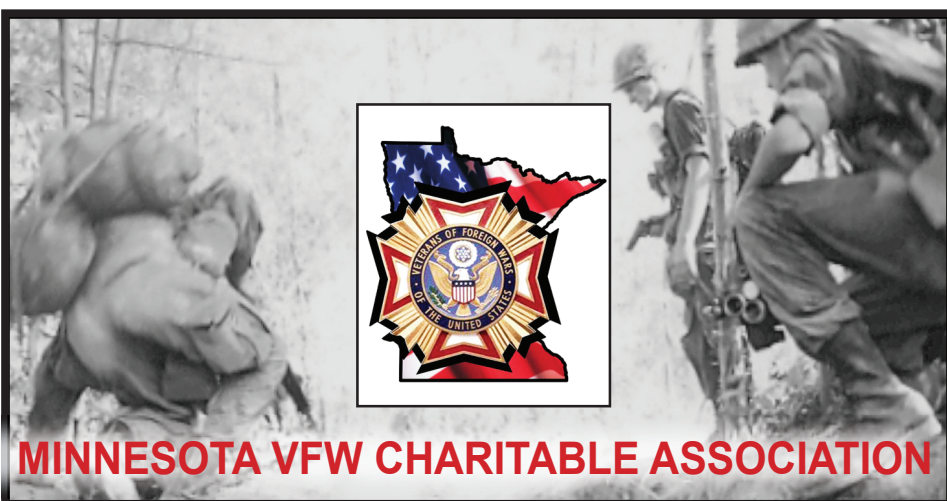
or contact the presenter at...

[arnkind@historicalexperiences.org](mailto:arnkind@historicalexperiences.org)

For more information on THE BOYS of '61 see:  
<https://www.minnesotaboys61.org/>

**Schedule your program today and help build Minnesota's BOYS of '61 Memorial!**

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



## MINNESOTA VFW CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION

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: \_\_\_\_\_

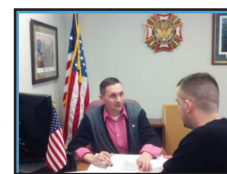
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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



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

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

- \* Establish a monthly or annual deduction to the MN VFW Charitable Association from your checking account or credit card.
- \* 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](mailto:mnvfwcharitable@gmail.com) or by writing to: VFW Charitable Association, 20 W. 12th St., Room B-5, St. Paul, MN 55155.



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

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