

# Gopher



# Overseas

Official Publication to More Than 84,000 Members

of the Department of Minnesota, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

Volume 75, NO. 2

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

June 2021 - September 2021

## Department Fall Conference Sept. 24-26

By Cheryl Burton, Department Office Manager

We had a great time catching-up with friends and celebrating the VFW's 100th Anniversary during our state Convention. There was a new venue of entertainment that went very well. During the auction we had an exciting display of enthusiasm and generosity and we thank everyone for giving towards TAPS.

The 2021 Fall Conference is being hosted by the VFW Post #1639 in Willmar during the weekend of September 24-26, 2021.

This fall is a great opportunity to visit the City of Willmar, to learn about all of our VFW Programs, and continue catching up with friends at the Willmar Conference Center. All VFW and Auxiliary members are encouraged to attend the Fall Conference. Of all the conferences

organized by the VFW, this is by far the most educational. You do not want to miss it. If you have any questions about the VFW or the Auxiliary, or our Programs, this will be the place to get all the answers. This year's hot topics will be a seminar explaining in detail the "Dashboard" on the VFW National Website with State Adjutant/Quartermaster Dewey Hermanson and "How to Zoom" by David Thul, the Teacher of the Year Chairman. On the Auxiliary side, receive hands on training with Laurie Dale in "Administration 101" and "Auxiliary Mentoring" with Jane Ziebarth.

### REGISTRATION

Registration for the Fall Conference, hosted by VFW Post #1639, will begin on Friday and Saturday in the

Lobby of the Willmar Conference Center from 3:00 to 6:00 pm (Friday) and from 7:00 am to 2:00 pm (Saturday). Banquet tickets can be picked up during this time.

### SCHOOLS OF INSTRUCTION AND SEMINARS

VFW and Auxiliary members can expect some very positive and creative ways of being educated about the VFW Programs of this Great Organization. In addition, a number of opportunities will be offered for the membership to gain a greater knowledge of a variety of VFW Programs. All Commanders, Presidents, Quartermasters, Treasurers, Chairmen and Members are urged to attend as many Schools **Convention - Cont. on Page 7**



**2021-2022**  
**State Commander**  
**Barry Henriksen**

Member of  
VFW Post 1782  
White Bear Lake, MN

Thank you so much for electing me to be your Department of Minnesota VFW Commander. I am honored. As I write this, I have been commander for four weeks. In that time, I have been to six districts already. In another article I wrote about the Officers 100th Anniversary Road Trip. It was great getting out to the 5th, 3rd, and 2nd Districts on our trip. Since then, I have been in parades in the 4th (White Bear Lake), the 7th (Forest Lake), and the 6th (Hinckley). All these events have been a lot of fun. A year ago, none of these events took place.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the Fall Conference in Willmar. The joint testimonial will be a lot of fun! Auxiliary President Jamie and I have a joint project. It is "Folds of Honor". They provide educational scholarships to spouses and children of America's fallen and disabled service members. We will have an initial "Parade of Checks" at the banquet. There will also be great classes on all our key programs. The best way to have a successful year is to get a great start and the Fall Conference will help you get there.

Make sure you attend the membership seminar. This year's **COMMANDER - Cont. on Page 10**

## "A Trumpet for A Rifle" PDC Robert "BOB" Mares passes at Age 96

By Jim Hesselgrave, Past State Adjutant-Quartermaster

Bob was a Proud Marine. Serving in the Pacific Theatre during World War II, he saw duty at Peleliu, Tsingtao and China. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in May of 1943. After Boot Camp, he was assigned to the Marine Barracks Dance Band and Military Dance Band. From there, he was assigned to the Pacific. Bob has been quoted as saying, "What a let down - a Trumpet for a Rifle". He was Discharged from the Marine Corps in April, 1946.

Mares joined the VFW at Raymond J. Smith Post 2609 in 1946 and later transferred his membership to World War II Post 6845 in 1949. Bob served through the Chairs of Post 6845 and was an All-State Post Commander in 1967-68. He also earned All-State Post Quartermaster honors from 1968



**Robert Mares**  
**Past State Commander**  
**1982-1983**

to 1972. Bob served through the Fourth District VFW chairs, serving as their District Commander in 1973-74. He then served through the State Chairs and becoming an All-American State Commander in 1982-83. Bob then went on to serve as District Area 'E' VFW National Council Member from 1984 -1986. Bob served in a number of notable Chairmanships and Positions. He was the Chairman of the 1970 VFW National Convention Corporation, held in St. Paul from July 1-4, 1970. In 1974, when the VFW National Convention returned to Minneapolis, Bob was elected the VFW National Convention Treasurer. Through the years, Mares also held positions as State Chief of Staff, State Inspector, State Club Committee and numerous

**MARES - Cont. on Page 12**

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## Save The Date!! Upcoming VFW Events

**Fall Conference**  
September 24-26, 2021  
Willmar Conf. Center  
Willmar

**Midwinter Conference**  
January 21-23, 2022  
Minneapolis Marriott  
City Center

**National Legislative Conference**  
Feb. 27 - Mar 3, 2022  
Washington, D.C.

**Minnesota Veterans Day on the Hill**  
March, 2022  
(Day TBD)

**VFW State Hockey Tournament**  
March, 2022  
Dilworth

**State Convention & Training Schools**  
June 8-12, 2022  
St. Cloud

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

# Top News

## MN Officers Receive All-American Honors

### CONGRATULATIONS!

2020-2021 All-American District Commander honorees from Minnesota:

- David Staehlin, 4th District Commander
- Jon Durst, 6th District Commander

2020-2021 All-American Post Commander honorees from Minnesota:

- Leo Cooke, White Bear Lake Post 1782
- Don Lohse, Jenkins Post 3839
- Ed Keogh, Montgomery Post #5340
- Dennis Maddox, Elk River Post 5518
- Todd Roberts, USS Dorchester Post #8731
- Bruce Heil, Cottage Grove Post 8752
- Paul Lindahl, Woodbury Post #9024
- Daniel Swanson, Randall Post 9073

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

The following is a list of the criteria that each District/Post needs to meet to qualify.

District All-American Criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership greater than 100%</li> <li>• Finish in the top 10 Districts in your division that meet all of the following criteria:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Voice of Democracy - minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging</li> <li>- Patriot's Pen - minimum of one entry advanced to Department judging</li> </ul>
District All-American Awards	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All-American District Streamer</li> <li>• All-American District Citation</li> <li>• All-American Name Badge</li> <li>• All-American Cap</li> <li>• All-American Lapel Pin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top two District Commanders in each division will receive:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A \$1000 stipend used towards attending the VFW National Convention</li> <li>- Reserved seating at the VFW National Convention Joint Opening Session</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Post All-American Criteria	
* All-American Post candidates must meet all of the following criteria:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership greater than 100%</li> <li>• Voice of Democracy - minimum of one entry advanced to District judging</li> <li>• Patriot's Pen - minimum of one entry advanced to District judging</li> <li>• Hold a fundraiser with the proceeds going to Veterans &amp; Military Support Program Services, minimum \$100.</li> <li>• Create Post social media site or actively maintain existing site.</li> <li>• Five (5) New Action Corps Sign-Ups: To sign up: Text "VFW" to "50457" to sign-up five (5) previously unsubscribed members or VFW supporters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner twice with two separate organizations like Team RWB, Operation Ramp It Up, Operation Gratitude, Team Rubicon, Merging Vets &amp; Players and other VSOs to include our friend at Sport Clips and Burger King. (Submit both online reports through dashboard.)</li> <li>• Have a 10% increase in total impact in Community Service. (\$ Donated + Hours = Total Impact) *Baseline has been established within the KPI Tools for Community Service.</li> </ul>
Post All-American Awards	
* All posts that meet the Qualifying Percentage and the program participation criteria will receive an All-American Post Citation, Post Streamer and be recognized in the VFW magazine.	
* The top 25 Posts in each Division will receive:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgment in VFW magazine</li> <li>• Acknowledgment during the All-American Awards Ceremony at the National Convention</li> <li>• All-American Post citation</li> <li>• All-American Post flag streamer</li> <li>• All-American citation - commander</li> <li>• All-American name badge - cmdr.</li> <li>• All-American cap (commander only)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All-American lapel pin (cmdr. only).</li> <li>• All-American team Post member lapel pin (25 pack)</li> <li>• The top <b>five</b> commanders in each division will also receive:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending VFW National Convention</li> <li>- Reserved seating at the VFW National Convention joint opening session</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 100th Year MN VFW Road Trip - Leg #1

By Barry Henriksen, State Commander



As part of the 100th Anniversary of the Department of Minnesota VFW the state officers went on a three-day road trip June 24-26. State Commander Barry Henriksen, Past Commander Curt Hermanson, Sr. Vice Dale Hooegeveen, and Jr. Vice Dan Meyer started the weekend on Thursday night with a dinner in the 5th District at the Willmar VFW prepared by Nancy Kaenel of the auxiliary. Past Cmdr. Hermanson presented Post Commander Luke Billmeier with his All-State white hat. Thank you to past Post Commanders Brian Gislason and Al Kelm along with District Commander Mike Gearman for their work on the event. Willmar is excited to host the Fall Conference and hopes you drop by the post home to see the outstanding murals that depict service throughout our countries overseas conflicts.

State Commander's Project Chair Dan Jordan joined the officers on Friday for a great day in the 3rd District. It started with lunch at a veteran owned restaurant in Fairfax. Dept. Jr. Vice Dan Meyer's

hometown was not a disappointment. He took us to the veteran owned Black Cherry Smokehouse. Authentic Texas barbecue was delicious! Make sure you stop in if you are in the Fairfax area.

Friday evening was spent at the Redwood Falls VFW. Post Sr. Vice Cmdr. Duane Frank put together a great program. The mayor of



Pictured above: Jr. Vice Dan Meyer, Cmdr. Barry Henriksen, Past Cmdr. Curt Hermanson, Sr. Vice Dale Hooegeveen at Willmar Post 1639.

**ROAD TRIP - Cont. on Page 10**

## 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: vfwmnoffice@gmail.com  
Webpage: www.vfwmn.org

### Department Claims Office:

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

### Auxiliary Headquarters :

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

### Minneapolis VA

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

## GOPHER OVERSEAS'R

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Publications Committee:  
Barry Henriksen, Commander; Dale Hooegeveen, Sr. Vice Commander;  
Dan Meyer, Jr. Vice Commander; David Staehlin, Judge Advocate;  
Ken Schroeffer, editor..

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406 West 36th Street  
Kansas City, MO 64111

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# Department Headquarters News

## Senior Vice Commander

By Dale Hoogeveen, State Senior Vice Commander

The Department of Minnesota is celebrating 100 years of service to veterans and their families in 2021. The State Convention was a great success. Commander Hermanson and President Amundson's project supporting the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) generated approximately \$60,000 in donations. Thanks to all who contributed to this incredible result! Past State Commander Hermanson, State Commander Henriksen and their line officers enjoyed the hospitality of the 5th District and Willmar Post 1639, 3rd District and Redwood Falls Post 2553 and 2nd District and Chaska Post 1791 as

we continue to celebrate our 100th Anniversary.

Congratulations to all of the All-American District and Post Commanders. It is an outstanding reflection on them, the comrades in their districts and posts and the Department of Minnesota.

District Commanders Jon Durst as well as Post Commanders Ed Keogh, Todd Roberts and Paul Lindahl will be recognized at National Convention for finishing in the top levels of their respective divisions.

Our membership numbers declined this past year as 700 plus comrades left our ranks. I encourage

**SR. VICE - Cont. on Page 14**

## Junior Vice Commander

By Dan Meyer, State Junior Vice Commander

Being a member of the greatest combat veterans organization is a honor for me. There was a reason I joined this organization thirty years ago. The reason I joined is still there but many other reasons have come along during that time.

When you know what your passion is, go with it. I have discovered that my passion is the VFW and the veterans it serves.

Find out if there is something you can do to help out your post or district. The most rewarding job you

can think of is at your post.

Life is short. Take some time for yourself and help out your fellow veterans or auxiliary members. If they are not members get them into this organization. Life can be a rat race but there is always time for helping out.

I firmly believe if you help out in some way you will fill the satisfaction in knowing that you made someone happy.

Stay safe and stay strong and remember we are all in this together.

## Judge Advocate

By David Staehlin, State Judge Advocate

As the Department Judge Advocate and Parliamentarian, I am happy to answer your questions regarding bylaws and parliamentary procedure. Do you want to propose a bylaw change—at any organizational level? I would be happy to help you with the wording of the motion and to discuss the bylaw amendment process. Contact me at [david@staehlin.us](mailto:david@staehlin.us) or 651-261-5802.

We are planning a series of Zoom training lessons on topics related to

parliamentary procedure. We will have an online presentation and discussion once a month through May 2022 with a capacity of 100 participants. We will offer the same lesson twice each month—usually at 7 p.m. on a Thursday evening and at 9 a.m. on a Saturday morning to allow for increased participation. Join any of the lessons that sound interesting or helpful to you. Watch

**JUDGE - Cont. on Page 12**

## Adjutant-Quartermaster

By Dewey Hermanson, Department Adjutant-Quartermaster

All District and Post Adjutants.

At Fall Conference there will be required training for all Adjutants on the VFW Dashboard. All Adjutants should have a logon ID and Password to access the [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org) website.

All Quartermasters (Post and District) are required to be bonded according to Section 703 of the Bylaws either annually by the

Department of MN VFW, or the post's insurance company. If you are bonded by the VFW, remember all bonds issued by the VFW expire on August 31, 2021.

Trustees are required to complete their audits within the 30 days of the end of each quarter. Let's get them done and turned in. Failure to file the audits can void your QM bond.

# 2021-2022 Department Officers

## Minnesota V.F.W. Council of Administration

## Auxiliary to the V.F.W. Council of Administration

Officer	Home City	Home Post
Commander Barry Henriksen	White Bear Lake	Post #1782
Sr. Vice Commander Dale Hoogeveen	Chaska	Post #1791
Jr. Vice Commander Dan Meyer	Fairfax	Post #8459
Quartermaster Dewey Hermanson	Cannon Falls	Post #4452
Adjutant Dewey Hermanson	Cannon Falls	Post #4452
Judge Advocate David Staehlin	Cottage Grove	Post #8752
Surgeon Dr. James Tuorila	St. Cloud	Post #428
Chaplain Leonard Gudmunson	Hastings	Post #1210
Chief of Staff David Adams	White Bear Lake	Post # 1782
Member at Large Dewey Hermanson	Cannon Falls	Post #4452
Chief Inspector Lawrence Grindland	S. Saint Paul	Post #295
Past Commander Curt Hermanson	Cannon Falls	Post #4452
Officer of the Day Donald Heuer	Rosemount	Post #9433
National Council MBR Thomas Hanson	Willmar	Post #1639
MOC Grand Cmdr James Dalziel	St. Cloud	Post #4847
1st District Cmdr. Thomas Brown	Lake City	Post #8729
2nd District Cmdr. Edward Keogh	Montgomery	Post #5340
3rd District Cmdr. Bill Brockberg	Worthington	Post #3958
4th District Cmdr. Michael Lindvall	White Bear Lake	Post #1782
5th District Cmdr. Michael Gearmann	Madison	Post #1656
6th District Cmdr. Jonathon Durst	Monticello	Post #8731
7th District Cmdr. Charles Hawkins	Coon Rapids	Post #9625
8th District Cmdr. Robert Stoehr	Cook	Post #1757
9th District Cmdr. Kelly Booge	Bemidji	Post # 1260

Officer	Home City	Home AUX
President Jamie Cassavant	Crookston	AUX #1902
Sr. Vice President Sonia Tatge	Kenyon	AUX #141
Jr. Vice President David Scofield	Litchfield	AUX #2818
Chaplain Karen England	Lake City	AUX #8729
Conductress Julie Stoehr	Cook	AUX #1757
Guard Paige Amundson	Madison	AUX #1656
Chief of Staff Jane Ziebarth	Princeton	AUX #806
Secretary/Treasurer Laurie Dale	Kenyon	AUX #141
1st District President Linda Henry	Rochester	AUX #1215
2nd District President Jean Keogh	Montgomery	AUX #5340
3rd District President Carolyn Penning	Wilmont	AUX #2603
4th District President Jean Opatrny	Mendota	AUX #6690
5th District President Caitlin Amundson	Madison	AUX #1656
6th District President Rita Reikofski	Watkins	AUX #5460
7th District President Char Guse	Spring Lake Pk.	AUX #6587
8th District President Jean Harkins	Gilbert	AUX #4456
9th District President Melissa Krosko	Detroit Lakes	AUX #1676
Past Department Presidents on Council:		
PDP Gail Brekke	Moorhead	AUX #1223
PDP Patches Presfield	St. Cloud	AUX #4847
PDP Francesca Bill	Brooklyn Park	AUX #3915
PDP Paige Amundson	Madison	AUX #1656

# Minnesota Auxiliary News

STATE PRESIDENT  
VFW Auxiliary



**Jamie  
Cassavant**

Member of  
VFW Post 1902 Auxiliary  
Red Lake Falls, MN



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

Dear VFW and VFW Auxiliary Members:

I am so honored and humbled to serve as your Department President this year. "Serving Our Heroes and Their Families ... Before, During and After" is my theme.

This is our sole purpose ... to take care of our heroes and their families --- before deployment, during deployment and after deployment. My pin is a patriotic ribbon with a set of military dog tags. I chose the "dandelion" as my flower as it is the official flower of military children. Military children bloom everywhere the winds carry them ... they are ready to fly in the breezes that take them to new adventures, new lands, and new friends.

We need to expand our reach in our communities, we need to get our members engaged in volunteering again, and we need to increase our ability to adapt. We, as an organization, have important work to do for our heroes and their families. We need to get this vital work done but we can have fun as we do it. Start today and make a difference.

Without question, COVID-19 posed unbelievable challenges for us personally, for our organizations, and our communities. Within every

challenge is also an opportunity. We were not able to volunteer as we had been, but we connected, adapted and volunteered in new ways.

Let's start today – by showing that we truly value our members, new and seasoned. Let's welcome new ideas and find ways to reach new goals. We have all the resources we need to be successful. Talk with the mentors in our Auxiliaries, Districts and on the Department level. Attend Fall and Mid-Winter Conferences and June Convention. There is a wealth of information and contacts at these meetings. Attend the District Meetings for great information and networking. Use the resources that are in General Orders and Dept. Chairmen Bulletins. Go to the Resources Page in MALTA, check Dept and National Facebook Pages. Another way to reach our goals are to partner with local groups and organizations and work for our veterans. We can then work other events going on in our communities as outreach projects.

Start now to find new opportunities to engage and make an impact in our VFW and VFW Auxiliary family and our communities. Thank you for all that you do! You are appreciated!

## Treasurer/Secretary Chair

By Laurie Dale

Greetings everyone

The Department purchased a subscription to ZOOM last year and we are offering the use of our account to any District or Auxiliary that would like to set up a ZOOM meeting. You must contact the Department Office to make arrangements. It is first come, first served as far as scheduling. Any District or Auxiliary may only have one (1) ZOOM meeting scheduled at any given time. This allows others to get on the schedule during popular meeting nights/times. We are happy to offer this service to our Districts and Auxiliaries so that they may continue to do the important work they do. If you have questions about how to use ZOOM, feel free to contact the office at 651-291-1759.

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

you are trying to complete the 990N e-postcard online and someone is trying to charge you a fee to do it..... you're on the wrong website! Please let us help you if you need it.

It is not necessary to send a copy of your bond to the Department Office if you are bonding through the National Organization....only when using an outside company is it necessary for you to send a copy of your bond to the Department Office. Bonds purchased from a source other than National require Council approval. Bonds must be purchased in the amount of DOUBLE the amount of your Auxiliary assets. Bonds must be purchased no later than August 31, 2021.

Our Department Office is open Monday – Friday from 8 AM – 4 PM. You may call us at 651-291-1759 or email us at treasurer@vfwamn.org or secretary@vfwamn.org we ask that you not use our personal emails or personal phone numbers to reach us for auxiliary business.

**OFFICERS DUES - Must be paid by December 31.**

## National District Council

By Frankie Bill, Member Area E

Comrades and Members,  
I have the distinct privilege to represent all members of the Department of Minnesota, VFW Auxiliary for the 2021-2023 term. It is an honor to be Minnesota's next National District Council Member for Area E. I want to thank Gail Brekke, for fulfilling this role during a very difficult and challenging period. COVID-19 hit the hardest during her term and put all of us to the test. However, we are a resilient people and persevered with unwavering support for our Veterans, families, and extended communities. Gail did a wonderful job keeping all Minnesota Auxiliary members

informed on all matters of concern and shared helpful information from National Headquarters. I intend to continue the good work she so elegantly navigated during the most unusual and unfamiliar times.

Congratulations to Commander Barry and President Jaime as they settle in to their year leading the Minnesota VFW and Auxiliary members during 2021/2022. I know they will do great things as we continue to move away from the pandemic and settle into new routines growing these two elite organizations together. I look forward to seeing everyone at Fall Conference in Willmar.

## Membership Chair

By Karen E. England

### Caution

We're Under Construction. We're putting on our hardhats and going to work! With the VFW as our foundation, let's pile up members (like bricks), and rebuild on the framework of our mission. We need to stay level – calm and cool! Together under one roof, we are supporting our VFW always and in all ways!

**Communication:** Be sure to share with your Membership Chairs at the District level and the Department level (i.e. me) about your successes and challenges. We are constantly "Under Construction" and working on new and creative ways to recruit and retain. Please do not be shy. Ask questions. We are all in this together! Let's get Minnesota to 100% by December 31st. Check out the Membership display at Fall Conference to find out about fun incentives.

**Membership Letters:** BEFORE Fall Conference, get your Auxiliary dues notices out to your annual members. Print them right from Malta and pop them in the mail, or send them by email. Be sure to let them know that they can pay their dues to the auxiliary OR they can pay on Malta.

**Membership Challenge:** Our National Ambassador Debbie Tilley has suggested that every Department

should be at least 70% by August 31st. Minnesota is ONE of only two in the Big 10 Conference who have already hit that percentage. Way to Go, Minnesota! That means we are challenged to be over 80% by August 31st. Please come to Fall Conference with your Membership percentages.

**Life Members:** Our Auxiliaries all benefit by turning more of our annual members into LIFE members. We would all be on a much firmer foundation, if ALL are life members! We'd save on postage, paper, and ink, but more importantly it would save on all of the time it takes. Many Auxiliaries do promotions to encourage life memberships. Here are a few ideas:

- For every member who pays their dues by XX date, the auxiliary will draw one person and buy them a life membership;
- For every member who goes Life by XX date, the auxiliary will draw one person and pay it for them;
- For every member who goes Life, the Auxiliary will pay \$25/\$50 towards the cost;
- Do a special fundraiser to purchase life memberships for your senior members or officers.

Make Use of all of the Tools in our Toolbox!

**Plan Ahead To Make Your  
Auxiliary Stronger!!!  
DUES ARE NOW DUE !  
Better yet,  
Become a Life Member !!**

# Claims and Service Office Report

Jon Gohn, Claims Director

## Claims Office Update

Hello comrades.

Just a quick update on your VFW Claims Office. Currently we are still working a hybrid schedule where we have personnel in the office from 7am until 12pm daily and are taking walk-in clients to assist them. In the beginning of August, we will resume our full day schedule from 7am until 3pm. We continue to be very busy and have continued job security for sure.

There has been no slowing down of claims and appeals work and we stay consistently active in our conference calls with the VA for veterans and with teleconference/virtual hearings with Board of Veterans Appeals law judges. The virtual platform continues to be a great tool for us and especially the veterans we represent.

I would like to thank all of you for referring individuals to our office for assistance. I constantly hear how highly recommended we come, and it is refreshing to get these accolades. I can attest that you do have one of the best offices in the nation, not

because I believe so, but because the numbers speak for themselves. Customer service is key to our operation, and hearing regular thanks for simply returning phone calls and emails attests to our care and concern for those we represent.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the new benefits for our Vietnam Veterans, Korean DMZ veterans and Royal Thailand Air Force veterans who served during the Vietnam War. If you or someone you know has any of the prior conditions listed by law (Diabetes, Prostate Cancer, Ischemic Heart Disease, or a multitude of cancers) please reach out to us. Most importantly, if you or anyone you know, is diagnosed with hypothyroidism, Parkinson's type issues, or bladder cancer please reach out to us or your local county veteran service officer.

Office Phone: (612) 970-5669

Office Email:

VFW.VBASPL@VA.GOV

### 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

*We'll Help with YOUR Veteran Benefits*

## Homeless Veterans in MN

By Martin Adams, Department Chairman

As of July 15, 2021, there were 297 Veterans on the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) Homeless registry dashboard, 239 of which are in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties and the suburban Metro Area of the Twin Cities.

If you are a veteran and a landlord and willing to rent to a veteran on the MDVA registry, there are program incentives available through the MDVA Homeless Initiative. The MDVA has resources in place to work with both the landlord and the veteran. This includes a case worker for the veteran in need of housing as well as incentives and ways to reduce the risk for the landlords. If you think you could help in this program, please visit the following link to read more and provide your information to possibly help. <https://mn.gov/mdva/resources/homelessnessandprevention/homes-for-veterans.jsp> As a landlord, if you have any additional questions about the resources that are available, you can contact Derek Holt at [Derek.Holt@state.mn.us](mailto:Derek.Holt@state.mn.us) directly.

In addition to those Veterans that are already experiencing homelessness, the eviction moratorium that was put in place

as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been lifted and landlords are now able to file for evictions for nonpayment. It is anticipated that the number of veterans and their families whose housing stability could be at risk is likely to increase in the coming months.

Any Minnesota veteran who has fallen behind on rental payment due to COVID-19 related issues should connect with Rent Help Minnesota to catch up on their past due payments. Registration information can be found at <https://www.renthelpmn.org/> or by calling 211. If a veteran is behind on rent and eligible for the rental assistance, but does not apply, they are subject to eviction now that the eviction moratorium is expired.

There are resources available for Minnesota veterans and their families to stay housed or receive assistance should they become homeless, but sometimes they are unaware of these programs or unwilling or unable to apply. Please encourage any veteran who is experiencing housing difficulty to apply for assistance. It's much better to keep a veteran and their family housed than to try and find new housing after they have been evicted.

## VA Awards \$418 Million in Grants to Help Veterans and Families at Risk of Homelessness

July 6, 2021

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs awarded \$418 million in grants to more than 260 non-profit organizations in June, allowing low-income Veteran families around the nation to access services under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program.

SSVF grantees are authorized to use the funds to rapidly re-house Veterans who become homeless or to prevent Veterans from becoming homeless.

"As a result of VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families program and other housing assistance efforts, Veteran homelessness has been cut in half since the launch of 2010's Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "Since then, hundreds of thousands of Veterans and their families have been placed into permanent housing or prevented from falling into homelessness by VA's homelessness programs and targeted housing vouchers provided

by the Department of Housing and Urban Development."

SSVF grantees are in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Through partnerships with VA and community programs, SSVF provides eligible veteran families with outreach, case management and assistance obtaining VA and other benefits, which can include health care, financial planning, childcare, legal and fiduciary payee assistance, transportation, housing counseling and other services.

Helping Veterans in need of permanent housing remains a critical priority for VA. In fiscal year 2020, VA served 112,070 participants, including 77,590 Veterans and 19,919 children through the SSVF program.

This year's grant recipients successfully competed under a Notice of Fund Availability published November 19, 2020. The funding will support SSVF services from October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022.

Learn more about the SSVF program.

## Chaplain

By Len Gudmunson, Department Chaplain

Once again, I'm humbled to be your Chaplain. As I said at the State Convention, I will be serving ONLY one year.

If you are interested in being the State Chaplain, here is a short list of your duties:

- At C of A's, open the meeting with a prayer and close it with the National Home Prayer and the Closing Prayer;
- At the various banquets coordinate with the Auxiliary Chaplain to determine who does what prayers at the beginning and end of the meal;
- At joint meetings with the Auxiliary, especially the Memorial Service, coordinate with the Auxiliary Chaplain;

- Conduct a Chaplain's class at the Fall Conference.

If you are considering the position of State Chaplain, get the endorsement of your Post and District. Then visit all of the Districts during one of their district meetings so they know who you are and why you are running for the position.

We are looking for MN VFW Chaplain candidates. Post and District Commanders please submit your chaplain's name and why they should be chosen.

Entries are due to me no later than March 1, 2022. Please send them to [lenimpls@gmail.com](mailto:lenimpls@gmail.com).

If there is a VFW member that needs a get well or sympathy card, send me their name and address.

## Chief Inspector

By Larry Grindland, Department Inspector

All District Commanders and Post Inspectors are encouraged to attend the Inspector's Class at the Fall Conference on Saturday, Sept. 25 from 8:00-10:15 am.

All inspections should be completed and turned in to the Department before the Midwinter Conference. If there is a problem

within a post, this will give District Commanders and Post Inspectors time to take corrective steps to solve issues at the post level.

Remember, an inspector acts as an advisor by providing knowledge and guidance to assist a post in their operations.

# Message From Your National Council Member

By Tom Hanson,  
National Council Member

As we embark on a new VFW year let me offer a note of thanks to Past State Commander Curt Hermanson and his Department Council of Administration for their efforts this past year. It became increasingly more difficult as the residuals of COVID-19 seemed to linger and interfere with our normal way of doing business. They overcame numerous obstacles under challenging circumstances and are to be commended.

Congratulations to all our newly elected and appointed Post, District, and Department officers along with those of the Auxiliary as well. I trust everyone will approach the new year with enthusiasm and dedication to our ideals. I don't need to remind anyone of why we voluntarily give of ourselves for those that served and their dependents.

We "end" our VFW year and embark on a "new" one at the VFW National Convention that will commence in Kansas City in late July. The convention was originally awarded to Baltimore but, once more the phantom pandemic threw the proverbial monkey wrench into the mix and that city was unable to host the convention. With diligence and tenacity the VFW National staff were able to put together a convention, though limited to business sessions, that will accommodate the basic business requirements of the Organization. Truly the folks at National Headquarters are to be commended for this achievement!

## Have You Heard About the VFW's Partners in Patriotism?

Commander-in-Chief Harold "Hal" Roesch, II would like you to join with him in supporting the VFW's life changing programs for veterans, service members and their families and reduce the amount of mail you receive. The VFW has an option that allows you to support VFW programs on a monthly, quarterly, or yearly basis, as well as reduce expenses and eliminate the fundraising mail. It is called Partners in Patriotism.

As a member of Partners in Patriotism, you choose a set dollar amount for your donation (minimum amount of \$10) that is either charged to your credit card or set up as an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) from your bank account. Once you join the VFW's Partners in Patriotism, you will only receive the Quarterly Supporter newsletters to keep you informed of the many

**COUNCIL - Cont. on Page 12**

# MN VFW Legislative Report

By Jennifer Shumake, Legislative Co-Chairperson

## 1. State Representatives and Senators

The end of the state senate session ended on May 17, 2021. A number of bills were bundled into omnibus bills and committees have been called to work out the differences in policy. The big thing for leadership is working with the governor to come up with a target for each of the bills. We have concerns that the governor wants to continue to raise taxes on the state of Minnesota when we have a \$1.6 billion surplus and we have \$2.7 billion in reserve accounts, on top of the \$2.9 billion sent by the federal government and other bills that have provided money to the state. We are concerned that the executive branch wants to raise taxes on the top 1% of the state and on businesses. Negotiations are ongoing.

The Veterans Restorative Justice Act (VRJA) act has previously sustained bipartisan support. This has been approved by the house and senate committee on numerous occasions, as well as denied. The newest movement is the re-writing of the bill. Veteran Homelessness, Veteran Suicide, Veteran PTSD are three top priorities, and this all ties into VRJA. At the end of the meeting 5/11/21 these were tied in, but the bill was again kicked out. The senate and house are still not coming to an agreement. The amendments and changes were adopted on the conference committee Friday, May 17. Closer to a vote!! The latest and greatest, is that this was included in the Omnibus bills that were voted on.

**VFW Testifies Before Senate on Toxic Exposure:** VFW National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray testified on the VFW's top legislative priority of toxic exposure. Murray stressed the importance of combining the best pieces of each bill to cover as many veterans as possible. "Since we seem to expose nearly 100% of our troops to hazardous substances and environments, it is entirely unreasonable that almost 75% of them have their claims denied for exposure. It is time we establish a new framework to take care of veterans who were exposed to hazards both foreign and domestic, now and in the future," said Murray.

**VFW-Supported Legislation Passes House:** The House passed VFW-supported, H.R. 1448, *PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act*, and H.R. 958, *Protecting Moms Who Served Act*. The *PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act* would provide a VA pilot grant program to cover the cost of pairing a service dog with an eligible veteran diagnosed with PTSD. Also, VA would maintain certain veterinary insurance coverage for each service dog provided the veteran continues to see their physician or mental health



care provider every six months. The *Protecting Moms Who Served Act* would structure VA's maternity care coordination programs to provide community maternity care providers with training and support for veterans' unique pregnancy and postpartum needs. This legislation would also require a report on maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity among veterans, infant mortality rates, and racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes.

**VFW Testifies Before Senate on VA Disability Claims:** The Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing on the state of the VA disability claims process during the COVID-19 pandemic. VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci testified on how VFW Service Officers have adapted during the pandemic to continue to assist veterans with their claims using various IT resources. Gallucci stressed ongoing problems at VA that contribute to the ever-growing claims backlog, explaining that VA is measuring success by how quickly claims are processed rather than focusing on accuracy and timely access to benefits. Claims processed with speed, but which result in inaccurate ratings result in veterans filing appeals and waiting longer for their benefits. "Since Secretary Shinseki set the 125-day goal, VA has seemed obsessed with the benchmark to the detriment of the veteran experience," said Gallucci.

**VFW Testifies on Transition Assistance Program:** VFW National Legislative Director Patrick Murray testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity regarding the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Murray highlighted the efforts of VFW Service Officers who helped deliver benefits briefings on military installations while the VA instructors were furloughed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Murray stated, "We believe it is extremely important for TAP offices to integrate accredited VSOs into their operations, not as a third-party entity but as an integral part of the team."

## 2. Federal Congressional Representatives and Senators

Senator Amy Klobuchar recently helped introduce the Toxic Exposures Training Act. Like her other work on burn pit legislation, this act mandates the Department of Veteran Affairs benefits administration office have required training in how to handle burn pit cases. We hope this will help eliminate the backlog of benefits requests and ensure that no veteran impacted by burn pits will be denied benefits. Klobuchar's office announced their path forward for congressionally mandated funding on May 11. This is only open to government entities, universities, and non-profits. Those who are interested should reach out to Kurt Johnson.

### 2nd District Representative – Angie Craig

Preparations for the service academy nominations are underway. Interviews will hopefully be conducted in person, though it's too early to make that determination. Craig met with the Minneapolis VA's LGBT veteran care coordinator team in the first week of May to learn more about their work. Craig attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Shakopee center's new CBOC clinic. The current focus is on casework. Craig recently cosponsored the Special Guerilla Unit (SGU) Veterans Service Expansion Act of 2021, which would expand eligibility for special guerilla veterans who served alongside US soldiers during the Vietnam war. On January 16, congress extended burial rights to national cemeteries for SGU veterans who became naturalized citizens under the Hmong Naturalization Act of 2000. The bill would further expand eligibility to veterans who were naturalized prior to the 2000 law, authorizing the internment in all national cemeteries for all Hmong and Lao veterans who served in support of US forces in the Vietnam war. The bill is bipartisan. She cosponsored HR 2441, the Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans Mental Health Act of 2021, which would establish the new rural access network for growth, enhancement of programs, and to research on rural mental healthcare needs. The bill directs the VA to establish three new range programs and directs the GAO to conduct a study on whether the VA is meeting the needs of rural veterans who need mental healthcare.

### 3rd District Representative – Dean Phillips

Rep. Phillips visited the Days Inn on University Ave. at the end of April, which partners with MACV to provide temporary housing for

**LEGISLATIVE - Cont. on Page 14**

# Fall Conference - September 24-26, 2021

## CONF. - Cont. from Page 1

of instruction or seminars as possible. Attendance at all these schools of instruction and seminars are important to the success of our VFW and Auxiliary programs for the coming year. Please encourage a member of your Post or Auxiliary to attend all the meetings and have them share the information with your Post and Auxiliary members who were unable to attend. A complete schedule of schools of instruction and seminars are available in your Department and Auxiliary General Orders, on the VFW Department Web Page at: [www.vfwmn.org](http://www.vfwmn.org) and at the event.

### COMMITTEE DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITS

The Display and Exhibit Area will be open from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm on Saturday, September 25th in Gallery 7. All members will have ample opportunity to visit these displays and exhibits to pick up samples of all the available program information. All VFW and Auxiliary Programs will be exhibited here as well as our Veterans Homes and other related programs. All Post Commanders and Quartermasters wishing to have a chance at ALL-STATE honors, should locate the Membership Display Area and sign-in on the sheets provided there.

### TESTIMONIAL DINNER

This year, the annual Fall Conference Banquet will be the Testimonial Dinner for State Commander, Barry Henriksen and State President, Jamie Cassavant. It is open to all VFW and Auxiliary members. Additional information and an order form have been printed in this issue of the Gopher Oversea'r and online at: [www.vfwmn.org](http://www.vfwmn.org).

### SUNDAY COUNCIL MEETING

If you are staying over Saturday night, you may want to take in the Council of Administration meeting on Sunday. At this meeting, you will listen as the Department of Minnesota, VFW wrap up the final business of the 2021 Fall Conference. The VFW Council meeting starts promptly at 9:00 am.

**Lois Callahan  
National Conductress  
to Visit Fall  
Conference**



Lois Callahan will be participating in MN VFW Auxiliary events at the Fall Conference.

She has been a member of the VFW Auxiliary since 1990.



## FALL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE September 24-26, 2021

Willmar Conference Center- 2100 E. Hwy 12, Willmar, MN

UNWAVERING SUPPORT



FOR UNCOMMON HEROES

### FRIDAY, September 24, 2021:

<b>6:00 A.M. Mon-Fri</b>	<b>Breakfast on your own</b>	<b>Hotel</b>
<b>10:30 A.M.</b>	<b>Internal Affairs Committee (Tentative)</b>	<b>Boardroom</b>
<b>Noon - 6:00 P.M.</b>	<b>Registration</b> Register at VFW Post #1639 1108 US-12, Willmar, MN 56201	
<b>1:00 P.M.</b>	<b>Finance Committee</b>	<b>Boardroom</b>
<b>2:30 P.M.</b>	<b>Gambling Meeting</b>	<b>Gallery 7</b>
<b>3:30 P.M.</b>	<b>MNVFW Charitable Association Meeting</b>	<b>Boardroom</b>
<b>6:00 P.M.</b>	<b>VFW Council of Administration</b>	<b>Gallery 7</b>
<b>6:00 P.M.</b>	<b>Auxiliary Council of Administration</b>	<b>Galleries 1-4</b>
<b>After Meetings</b>	<b>Hospitality Rooms</b>	<b>Location TBA</b>

### SATURDAY, September 25, 2021:

<b>7:00 A.M. Sat-Sun</b>	<b>Breakfast on your own</b>	<b>Hotel</b>
<b>7:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.</b>	<b>Registration</b>	<b>Atrium</b>
<b>8:00 A.M. - 3:30 P.M.</b>	<b>SEMINARS/HANDS-ON INSTRUCTION</b>	<b>Galleries 1-6</b>
<b>8:00 A.M. - 3:30 P.M.</b>	<b>PROGRAM EXHIBITS/Poppy Contest</b> Exhibit set up from 7 - 7:45 am Chairs please staff your Displays from 2 - 2:45 pm	<b>Gallery 7</b>
<b>4:30 P.M.</b>	<b>Church Services</b> <b>Catholic Service</b> <b>Protestant Service</b>	<b>Gallery 4</b> <b>Gallery 2</b>
<b>5:45 P.M.</b>	<b>General Reception</b>	<b>Atrium</b>
<b>7:00 P.M.</b>	<b>Conference Banquet</b>	<b>Galleries 5-7</b>
<b>After Banquet</b>	<b>Hospitality Room</b>	<b>Location TBA</b>

### SUNDAY, September 26, 2021:

<b>7:00 A.M. Sat-Sun</b>	<b>Breakfast on your own</b>	<b>Hotel</b>
<b>9:00 A.M.</b>	<b>VFW Council of Administration</b>	<b>Gallery 7</b>

Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Minnesota  
**FALL CONFERENCE HOUSING RESERVATIONS**  
Willmar, Minnesota **September 24-26, 2021**  
**Call the Hotel of your choice to make reservations**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Share with: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Post # \_\_\_\_\_ District # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Arrival Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\*DEADLINE DATE: August 23rd, 2021\*\*\***

Choose	HOTEL	Rooms	Rates per Night
_____	<b>Holiday Inn Express</b> Call 1-320-231-2601	Single King Double/Double	\$109.99+tax \$109.99+tax
		Room Block: "VFW FALL CONFERENCE"	
_____	<b>Days Inn</b> Call 1-320-403-2334	Single Queen Double Queens	\$94.99+tax \$99.99+tax
		Room Block: "VFW FALL CONFERENCE"	
_____	<b>Country Inn/Suites</b> Call 1-320-214-0300	Single King Double Queens	\$114.99+tax \$124.99+tax
		Room Block: "VFW FALL CONFERENCE"	

**Please use "VFW Block" Name to receive hotel room price adjustment**  
**You Need Your Credit Card to Reserve and Check into the Hotel**  
**Questions? Call Cheryl at 651-291-1757 or email [mnavfw@vfwmn.us](mailto:mnavfw@vfwmn.us)**

Fall Conference Banquet  
**SATURDAY, SEPT 25, 2021**

**Willmar Conference Center**  
Willmar, Minnesota

**PLEASE RESERVE**  
**TICKETS** at \$29 each

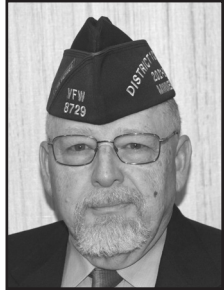
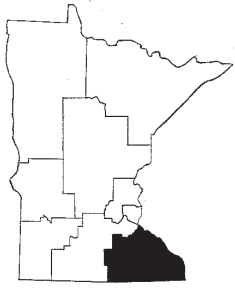
Enclosed is  
Check# \_\_\_\_\_ for \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
made out to **POST #1782**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 POST/AUX# \_\_\_\_\_ DIST # \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail BANQUET**  
**Reservations to:**  
**VFW Post #1782**

Attn: Fall Conference Banquet  
4496 Lake Avenue South  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

# News from YOUR District Commanders and Presidents!



**Thomas Brown, Commander  
First District**

Greetings from the First District. Let's start with the congratulations. If you read your June/July VFW Magazine this may be old news, but a shout out to: Erin Stoeckig the Voice of Democracy winner. Erin was sponsored by Post 1215 of Rochester, MN; and Julianna Stacey, Patriot's Pen winner, she was sponsored by Post 1140 of Long Prairie, MN. Also Post 3723 of Owatonna, MN for returning home with the J.M. Jorgenson Poppy trophy.

Looking ahead a couple of months, post inspections will commence. Just a heads up, are you ready? If you are a new Commander or quartermaster and this comes as a surprise, ask a Past Commander what to expect.

Keep an eye out for potential new members. Each one of us is a Recruiter. Unit hats, bumper stickers, tattoos. It never hurts to ask if they served and where.

The new 2022 VFW calendars are being distributed. Pick yours up at your local Post. It's a great money raiser for the Department and for your own Post.

A special thank you to Past First District Commander Dave Thul. Dave not only ushered us through the pandemic but also provided the technical expertise to be able to broadcast District meetings before Zoom became popular.

Look out for yourself and keep a weather eye out for your comrades.

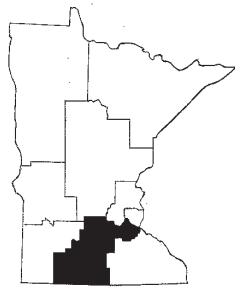


**Linda Henry, Auxiliary  
President First District**

Hello from the First District.

We held our Loyalty Days Convention in Owatonna in May. At the meeting I was elected as President for a third year. I am truly humbled by my district's continued trust and support for me. My symbol is the Eagle, my color is purple and my slogan is "Let's Soar Like an Eagle for our Veterans." I wish to thank my past officers and committee chairpersons for their hard work.

I am looking forward to all that the First District will accomplish this year. I know we will be great. Our meetings will be 8/7, 12/4, 2/5/22 and 4/30/22. Also, I am excited about the upcoming National Convention in Kansas City and the Fall Conference in Willmar and all that will be learned at these events. Let's all get out and work for our veterans and their families and make MN look GREAT!!



**Edward Keogh, Commander  
Second District**

It is great to be a Veteran and member of the VFW!

I will be contacting all Posts/Auxiliaries in the Second District to encourage them to participate in as many programs as possible. There are many very talented students in the State of MN, who I would like to see participate in Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen this year. This talent was proven this past year when a Minnesota Student was awarded first place in the National Voice of Democracy competition along with a student from Minnesota who was awarded fourth place in the National Patriots Pen competition. Now we know we have very talented students and it is due to the fact that we have very talented Teachers. Please participate in the Teacher of the Year program to recognize our outstanding teachers.

The Second District will be on the road recruiting new and to reinstate members to increase our membership.

This year, the Second District has a Commanders/Presidents Project. Our theme is "Sailing together to support our traveling Active Service Members." We will be soliciting contributions from all Posts/Auxiliaries in the Second District to contribute to the Armed Forces Service Center. To make a contribution please make checks payable to Armed Forces Service Center, 4300 Glumack Drive LT-A-2021, Minneapolis/St Paul Int. Airport, St Paul MN 55111-3003. We would like to see all Posts in the State of MN contribute to this great center.

I will work hard to communicate all pertinent information to members of the Second District on a continual basis to keep Second District strong, so we can continue supporting our Veterans, active Military, their families, our schools and communities.

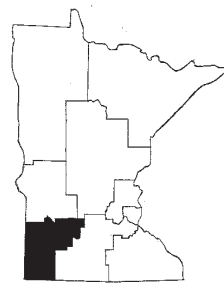


**Jean Keogh, Auxiliary  
President Second District**

Greetings from the Second District.

As your new Second District President, I am excited to kick off the new year with our team of dedicated officers and program chairs. Thank you for stepping up to serve this amazing organization. Thank you to all past officers and chairs for all you did for our Veterans, and will

**DIST. 2 AUX. - Cont. on Page 12**



**Bill Brockberg, Commander  
Third District**

Greetings from the Third District. Congratulations to comrade commander Barry Henricksen, and all the department and district officers elected to serve our fellow comrades and veterans.

As your new District Commander I will do my best to uphold the efforts and progress of my predecessors, especially immediate past Commander Buck Underwood. Thank you, Buck.

For this year, I am going to promote communication among members and Posts and to establish a pattern of members exercising care and concern for their fellow comrades and all veterans. I am hoping we, comrades of the Third District, will call at least three veterans per month each just to say, "Hi, and briefly discuss what's going on and how are you doing?"

My hope is that with increased communication to include "buddy calls" we may use these efforts to show our fellow veterans that the VFW has their best interests at heart and then maybe we can use that sense of trust or appreciation to include those whom we call to be a part of this great VFW Organization.



**Carol Penning, Auxiliary  
President Third District**

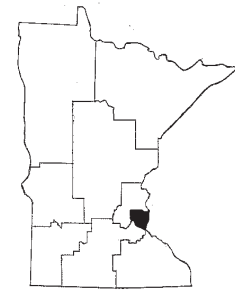
We are looking forward to an "open" and exciting 2021-2022 year. (We don't all ZOOM well).

Most of the VFWs and Auxiliaries in District 3 did an amazing job of honoring their Veterans at their Memorial Day Services. No matter how big or small their cemetery, flags were placed on all Veteran and Auxiliary member's graves. "we will never forget".

June 14 was Flag Day and several Posts and Auxiliaries decommissioned worn American Flags with a respectful flag burning, preceded by root beer floats. At this event Stacy Paul, one of our Auxiliary members, brought two therapy dogs she trains for us all to see, ask questions. The kids really enjoyed petting and holding them.

Duane Mabon from the Luverne VA informed us that we would be able to serve coffee on Thursdays afternoons in July and hopes to be able to expand it to two afternoons a week in August. Let's hope.

Thanks to all who accepted a program chair for our new year. I hope to see many of you at our District meeting October 2, 2021 in Westbrook.



**Michael Lindvall, Commander  
Fourth District**

It seems that we are getting back to normal and it's time to renew our commitment to serving veterans. The Fourth District is in an excellent position as we have achieved 100% membership. This is due to our previous commander David Staehlin tireless effort. His ability to keep things running during a difficult year is commendable. David is extremely organized and runs a tight ship, he was in the Navy after all. It's no wonder why he was selected as the Department Judge Advocate and the District has All-American honors.

The Fourth District has been blessed to have one of our members become Department Commander. Congratulations to Barry Henriksen from White Bear Lake Post 1782 for obtaining the coveted position. The District looks forward to a great year under your leadership.

The Fourth District has three All-American Posts; 1782 White Bear Lake, 8752 Cottage Grove and 9024 Woodbury. Besides the All-American honors two posts; White Bear Lake and Woodbury were chosen for the All-State Team. Post 1782's Commander Leo Cooke, our district junior vice, was chosen as the Captain of the All-State Team. This is the third time in the last five years the captain was chosen from White Bear Lake.

The Woodbury Post 9024 will be celebrating its 75th anniversary. It's an All-American Post and it has a wonderful team that does great work. Congratulation to Commander Paul Lindahl and to all members of the Post.



**Jean Opatrny, Auxiliary  
President Fourth District**

Members of the 4th District,

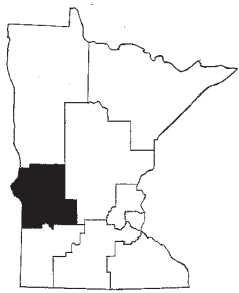
Thank you for having confidence to elect me as President of the 4th District. I will do my best to keep the Auxiliaries informed of events and information as I become aware of them.

My project to help the Minneapolis Veterans Home to purchase a whisper glider for the outside area. The whisper glider is a swing that people in wheel chairs can enjoy visits with families and friends.

The First District meeting was held July 24, 2021. President Jamie was the representative at the meeting. The 4th District members gave Jamie a warm welcome and listened to her words of wisdom and her presentation.

**DIST 4 AUX. - Cont. on Page 12**





**Michael Gearmann, Commander  
Fifth District**

Greetings from the 5th!  
Our district meetings for the coming year are as follows:

Sept, 19th 2 p.m. Willmar VFW  
Jan 9th 2 p.m. Starbuck VFW  
April 24th 10 a.m. Osakis VFW

All meetings will be zoom accessible. We are looking forward to hosting the Fall Conference in Willmar this year to show off our hospitality at the Willmar VFW.

I hope that everyone has a fun and safe summer.

See you all at Fall Conference.

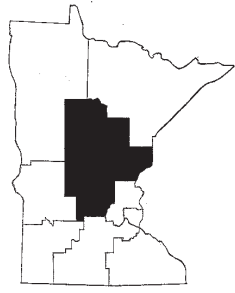


**Caitlin Amundson, Auxiliary  
President Fifth District**

Greetings, my name is Caitlin Amundson, and I am the 2021-2022 District 5 Auxiliary President. I became a member at 16 years old under the eligibility of my older brother, Cody, who was deployed to Iraq with the Army National Guard in 2005. I realized when he came home that I wanted to do something to return the favor of his service, so I joined the VFW Auxiliary to do all that I could for our veterans. I am now a proud life member of Lac Qui Parle Auxiliary 1656 in Madison.

Our lives were forever changed with COVID-19, and we were all forced into a new way of life. We had to adapt to how we lived our lives, did our jobs, and how we worked the VFWA programs. There was a bit of a learning curve for some people to adapt to those changes, but we all did it and came out on the other side having done an awesome job considering the circumstances. As a younger member and first time District President, I want to continue to adapt and make changes for the better of District 5, and after what we've done so far, I know that can be accomplished!

This year, District 5 Commander Mike Gearmann and I will have a joint district project. We will be working with an organization called Veterans in the Outdoors (VITO). VITO organizes hassle-free hunting and fishing trips for veterans and current service members at no charge to them. The organization also works with you to educate them about the outdoors. I am excited for the partnership on a personal level as well as the founder, an Army veteran who served in Afghanistan, was also a **DIST. 5 AUX. - Cont. on Page 12**



**Jonathon Durst, Commander  
Sixth District**

Greetings all!  
Words cannot properly express how honored and humbled I am to serve as your Commander for a second year. My hope is that this year we can continue to build on our successful, albeit unconventional, year last year.

We were able to achieve 100.45% in membership and led the Department with 40 new members and 74 new/renew life members! This tremendous performance earned the 6th District All-American honors, ranking 5th in our division. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of all of you for continuing the mission despite the hurdles of a global pandemic.

The best way to celebrate this achievement is to turn around and do it again!

VOD and Patriot's Pen information is already posted on National's website. The sooner we can get to our school leaders, the better chance these programs have at succeeding and being worked into curriculum.

Membership recruiting and retention is never ending. Fifteen posts achieved 100+% in 2020-2021, with many more dangerously close. Put the work in now so you do not have to scramble in June.

Our first district meeting is scheduled for Saturday August 7th at 1pm in Monticello. I look forward to seeing many of you there and at the Fall Conference in September.

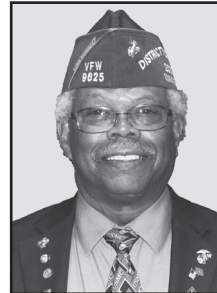
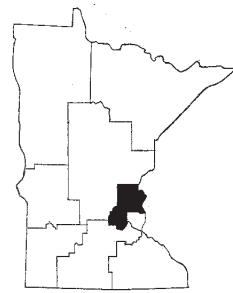


**Rita Reikofski, Auxiliary  
President Sixth District**

Greetings from the 6th District  
My name is Rita Reikofski from Wat-Kim-Valley Post 5460. I am so looking forward to working with the VFW and Auxiliaries, of this great organization, in support of the veterans and their families.

My project will be the St. Cloud Standdown Lady Veterans Boutique. Being a female veteran myself, I am looking forward to be a part of this organization.

Our District officials have a lot of great ideas that we hope to carry out and have fun doing them. We will be doing our FUN SOCKS for the 3rd year. Collecting them will continue until our District meeting in February 2022. They will then be delivered to the VA hospitals and homes for Valentine's Day. I am hoping to get



**Charles Hawkins, Commander  
Seventh District**

Greetings from the Mighty 7th District.

Comrades, now we begin a new year of fun and games! Some of our Post have been rejuvenating for the upcoming year. Now is the time to look at our post membership and start getting everyone active again. Last year was a tough year, but this one should be smooth sailing. So, lets get our district "Squared Away."

Our Community Service Projects should be in full swing. With the past few months in the bag, and the 4th of July just passing we should be going strong.

I hope that this year we can focus on our post blood drives. Our communities sorely need blood donations!

Last year we had a few Zoom meetings. Many post officers could not attend district meetings because of COVID. This year will be a great deal different with all of our district meetings at different posts.

We will be having our upcoming Fall Conference in Willmar.

It will be good to see old friends and get updates on the business at hand.



**Char Guse, Auxiliary  
President Seventh District**

Greetings from the 7th District.

Well, here we go again. Another year has officially kicked off. Between inspections, getting back into the schools to work our programs, to getting back out into the community, it will be a busy and exciting year for all of us. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone again. You have been missed.

Fall Conference in Willmar is coming up fast. Please plan to attend, as this is the best place to get all of the latest and greatest program information. Attend the seminars, visit the booth area, talk with the respective Department Chairman, attend the Council meetings,

back into quilt making for the VA hospital.

Our District officers are getting ready to start their yearly inspections. Just a reminder that bonds need to be purchased from twice the amount of your assets.

I would like to thank everybody for all that they do each and every day for our veterans, families and our communities.

## DISTRICT MEETINGS

- First District**  
Dec. 4 Rochester #1215 @ 9:30 AM
- Second District**  
Oct. 2 Chaska #1791 @ 1 PM
- Third District**  
Oct. 2 Westbrook #5098 @ 10 AM
- Fourth District**  
Oct. 23 Cottage Grove #8752 @ 9 AM
- Fifth District**  
Sept. 19 Willmar #1639 @ 2 PM
- Sixth District**  
Oct. 9 Wadena #3922 @ 1 PM
- Seventh District**  
Oct. 16 Bloomington #1296 @ 10 AM
- Eighth District**  
Oct. 2 Gilbert #4456 @ 9 AM
- Ninth District**  
Sept. 18 TRF #2793 @ 1 PM

## MOC

- Aug. 21 Dilworth #1223 @ 10 AM



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

whatever you do will only make your programs more successful this year. I like to put a face to the names of our chairmen.

Our 2021-2022 7th District meetings are:

- \* October 16th at #1296 Everett McClay in Bloomington
- \* December 11th at #3915 Palmer Lake in Brooklyn Park, (Pot Luck lunch to follow the meeting - all are welcome to join)
- \* February 12th at #425 George R. Wolff in Hopkins
- \* District Convention April 9th at #3915 Palmer Lake in Brooklyn Park.

If you are in the area, please feel free to stop in and visit one of our meetings.

May we all have the very best of years!

## Veteran's Day is November 11

Is your Post prepared to honor those who served their country in war or peace - living or dead.

*Don't Go It Alone!!!*

*JUST CALL!!!*



*THERE'S HELP!!!*



**Robert "Rick" Stoehr, Commander  
Eighth District**

I think we've all finally had a chance to take a sigh of relief with the downturn in COVID exposures and the relaxing of restrictions. It's changed us all, hopefully for the better. It's great to be able to once again "Stand Up" the Honor Guards and perform those things we do as veterans and members of the VFW and Auxiliary, be it Memorial Day events, parades at local festivals, Poppy distribution, etc. Since most things are back to normal, it feels like we're once again in the line of duty, fulfilling our obligation to serve and honor our veteran brothers and sisters, past and present.

The 8th District has made it through the last year and a half or so with a lot of hardworking folks. The posts and auxiliaries have done what is needed to be done to maintain their posts under some very difficult circumstances. I truly applaud their efforts and cheer their successes. Surprisingly enough we are starting to see more post-Vietnam Veterans starting to show up at our Posts, not a lot but it's happening and hopefully it's a sign of things to come.

There have been many changes made in the way we do business as VFW Posts. In most cases it was just simplifying the process. However, those changes will require post officers to seek training. I was pleased with the as promised changes in the training curriculum at the June State Convention and will be encouraging the posts in the district to reach out to the Department for assistance as they need to for help.

Our next district meeting will be held at Gilbert Post 4456 on October 2 at 9am.

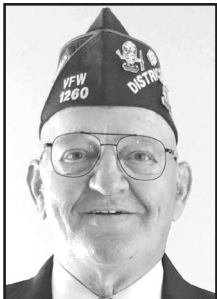
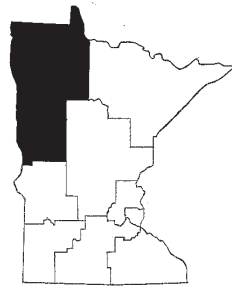


**Jean Harkins, Auxiliary  
President Eighth District**

Greetings from District 8.

Hello, my name is Jean Harkins. I have been an Auxiliary member since March, 1993 when I joined the Post 1720 Auxiliary. Currently, I am a member of Post 4456 Auxiliary. I joined under my dad's eligibility as a WWII Veteran. He joined the Naval Armed Guards at age 17 and served mostly on merchant and troop ships. One of the ships was the USS Lafayette (a converted French superliner the SS Normandie) when she was used as a troop and aircraft carrier in the Atlantic Theater. My brother served 4 years in the Army and 30 years in the Army Reserves and National Guard. They are my true heroes.

The District Auxiliary will have



**Kelly Booge, Commander  
Ninth District**

Hello Comrades,

For those that don't know me, my name is Kelly Booge, and my wife and I hale from Bemidji, home of Harold Baggenstoss, Post 1260.

I want to thank all of my Ninth District comrades for putting your trust in me as your leader. I'll work hard to make sure you continue to feel this was a wise choice. It is an honor to serve as your Commander, and I will work to do the best job possible.

As the pandemic begins to ease, we look forward to more members returning to meetings and working together to help our veterans and their families. We must stay watchful regarding the virus, and make sure we take care of ourselves and others. I also want to express my sympathies to all those who lost family members and friends to the pandemic. We have come through a very hard time.

I look forward to working with all members of the Mighty Ninth to increase our membership numbers, and to work on making our reporting as simple and concise as possible. Stay on top of "community service" and "Quarterly Audits" and we will be ahead of the game. Start early on "Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen" programs. School will already be in session by the time of our first District meeting. As we all know it was a young person from our state that won at National last year and in so doing received \$30,000 scholarship.

As we head into the new year, I look forward to working closely with all of you. Please know I welcome your comments and concerns, and encourage you to contact me at any time. Working together, we can accomplish a great deal. As opportunities arise, I look forward to getting out to the Posts and visiting with the members of the Ninth District.

an instructional meeting at Gilbert Post 4456 on August 7 at 9:30 am. There will be three District Auxiliary meeting this year:

- October 2, 2021, Gilbert Post 4456
- February 5, 2022, Hoyt Lakes Post 8846
- April 29-30, 2022, Ely Post 2717

It is an honor to have Rick Stoehr as my District Commander this year. I look forward to working with him. Our project will be the Silver Bay Veterans Home.

My symbol is a "key" and "anchor". I chose both in honor of my dad and brother along with Cmdr. Stoehr. My motto for this year is "Humility, Exceptionalism and Honor is the Key to our Veterans Heart".

### COMMANDER - Cont. from Page 1

All-American program requires posts to provide a 10% increase in community service impact. For many posts it might be just better reporting. There are also requirements for an active and updated social media site and VFW Action Corps activations. Your District and Department will help you meet these requirements.

We are here to help.

State officers will be putting together a second state 100th anniversary celebration run. It will be in the fall. Watch your General Orders and email blasts for details.

If you have an event coming up and would like a Department Officer to attend, get your request in. We love getting out to the posts.

Thank you for all that you do

### ROAD TRIP - Cont. from Page 2

Redwood Falls spent a significant amount of time talking about the growing community and the great relationship with the VFW. Three Eagle Scout candidates with their veteran scout leader were also present. The Redwood County Veterans Service Officer joined us for dinner. The event highlighted what we are all about, veterans and the community working hand in hand.

The final leg of the road trip was Chaska and the 2nd District. While the weather had been spectacular on Thursday and Friday, Saturday brought rain. But Chaska improvised. They brought the beanbags inside and had a spirited tournament. Jr. Vice Dan Meyer who claimed to have never played before turned out to be a natural. Sr Vice Dale Hoogeveen and Dan Jordan were excellent hosts. The local scouts cooked burgers to order. Past Cmdr. Hermanson's project TAPS was represented by parents who lost their Army daughter to suicide. They thanked Curt and Dan Jordan for raising over \$60,000 for TAPS. The Chaska event ended with one last TAPS fundraiser. The dunk tank! Department Judge David Staehlin did not go in the dunk tank but made a generous contribution instead. State Commander Henriksen

and Dan Jordan were among those that got sent into the water. And the rain even stopped for the dunking.

The officers are planning the second trip for north to the 8th, 9th, and 6th District this Fall. Hoyt Lakes in the 8th District has already requested to be part of the trip. The third road trip to the 4th, 7th and 1st Districts will be sometime after January 1, 2022. Look for more details in the General Orders and future editions of the Oversea'r.

Thanks again to all the posts and individuals that supported our first 100 year road trip! It was a blast.



**Pictured above: Dan Jordan sacrifices himself in the dunk tank to raise funds for the Commander's Project Folds of Honor.**



**Pictured above: Dept Officers with Redwood County Post 2553 Jr. Vice Cmdr. Duane Frank, post members and Eagle Scout candidates with their scout leader.**



**Melissa Krosko, Auxiliary  
President Ninth District**

Greetings from the Mighty 9th!

I would like to share how I joined the Auxiliary. I met my husband in 2011 and while we were dating he suggested that I join the VFW Auxiliary in Detroit Lakes, MN. I could not join under Larry because we were not married at the time, so I joined under my grandfather, Marvin Shambow, who was a WWII veteran.

I learned a lot about my

grandfather by just looking at his DD214. He served in South Africa, and stormed Omaha beach at Normandy. He never talked about his service in the Army, so I never heard any of the war stories. As a Native American, I knew I was very proud of his service to his country. I could tell so many stories, but I just want to let everyone know that I am immensely proud to serve as the 9th District President. There are so many people in my life that have served that I am honored to do what I can for every Veteran. My husband's service can be topic of another article.

# State Contest Winners

## NATIONAL AWARDS

### National Community Service Post

Keep-Zimmer Post 1782  
and Auxiliary White Bear Lake

Hugo Matejcek Post 3723  
and Auxiliary Owatonna

### POST PUBLICATIONS CONTEST

#### **CATEGORY I (250 and Less)**

##### **First Place**

Harold Baggenstoss Post 1260  
and Auxiliary Bemidji  
Editor John Naastad

##### **Second Place**

Lyle Russell Post 1210  
and Auxiliary Hastings  
Editor Lou Plevell

##### **Third Place**

Siemers-Hakes Post 10794  
and Auxiliary Milaca  
Editor Deann Reynolds-Merson

#### **CATEGORY II (251 & greater)**

##### **First Place**

Charles R. Knaeble Post 494  
and Auxiliary Crystal  
Editor Lesley Kurke

##### **Second Place**

Sgt. John Rice Post 6316  
and Auxiliary Blaine  
Editor Mary Lou Michels

##### **Third Place**

Granite Post 428  
and Auxiliary Saint Cloud  
Editor Dr. James R. Tuorila

### BEST POST NEWS ARTICLE

##### **First Place**

Lyle Russell Post 1210  
and Auxiliary Hastings  
Published in the Hastings Journal  
November 5, 2020

##### **Second Place**

Redwood County Post 2553  
Redwood Falls  
Published in the Redwood Falls Ga-  
zette  
December 1, 2020

##### **Third Place**

Mahlum Hanson Post 1647  
Brainerd  
Published in the Brainerd Dispatch  
April 6, 2020



#### **Scout of the Year**

**David Schindler - Eagle Scout**

Sponsored by: Glen C. Turner Post 5833 and Aux.



#### **J. M. Jorgenson Poppy Trophy Hugo Matejcek Post 3723 and Aux.**

presented by Cmdr. Curt Hermanson and  
Aux. Pres. Paige Amundson



#### **Dept. of MN Traveling Safety Award**

**1st place Hugo Matejcek Post 3723 and Aux.**

2nd place Keep-Zimmer Post 1782 and Aux.  
3rd place Charles D. Center Post 3289 and Aux.  
presented by Cmdr. Curt Hermanson and  
Aux. Pres. Paige Amundson



#### **J. Edgar Hoover (Police) Award**

**Officer Mike Bickel, Brooklyn Center Police Dept.**

Sponsored by: Clarence La Belle VFW Post 217



#### **Emergency Medical Technician Award**

**Justin Reid, Fire Captain**

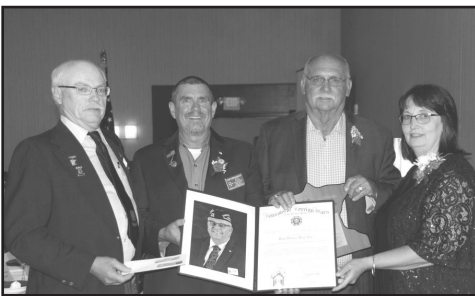
Minnesota Task Force One  
Sponsored by: Clarence La Belle VFW Post 217



#### **Fire Fighter Award**

**Shawn Hill, Firefighter/Paramedic**

Burnsville Fire Department  
Sponsored by: Glen C. Turner Post 5833 and Aux.



#### **Bus Driver of the Year Award**

**Don Nix, Bus Driver**

Vision Transportation  
sponsored by: Elk River-Rogers Post 5518

## MINNESOTA'S COMMUNITY SERVICE RECORDBOOK

### **CATEGORY I**

#### **First Place**

Charles D. Center Post 3289  
and Auxiliary Bemidji

#### **Second Place**

Curtis-Olson Post 9073  
and Auxiliary Randall

### **CATEGORY II**

#### **First Place**

Hugo Matejcek Post 3723  
and Auxiliary Owatonna

#### **Second Place**

Keep-Zimmer Post 1782  
and Auxiliary White Bear Lake

### **CATEGORY III**

#### **First Place**

Coon Rapids Post 9625  
and Auxiliary Coon Rapids

#### **Second Place**

Fred Babcock Post 5555  
and Auxiliary Richfield

## OUTSTANDING POST YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

### **CATEGORY I (less than 101 members)**

#### **First Place**

Brooker-Edmund Post 724  
and Auxiliary Circle Pines

#### **Second Place**

Wolf Lake Post 8165  
and Auxiliary Frazee

### **CATEGORY II (101 to 300 members)**

#### **First Place**

Olaf B. Damm Post 1216  
and Auxiliary Austin

#### **Second Place**

Charles D. Center Post 3289  
and Auxiliary New York Mills

### **CATEGORY III (greater than 300)**

#### **First Place**

Kraus-Hartig Post 6587  
and Auxiliary Spring Lake Park

#### **Second Place**

Hugo Matejcek Post 3723  
and Auxiliary Owatonna

## BEST SOCIAL MEDIA SITE

Mahlum Hanson Post 1647  
Brainerd

## All-State Commanders

**Captain of the All-State Commanders: Leo Cooke Post 1782**



Seated (l to r) Leo Cooke Post 1782; Edward Koegh Post 5340;  
Paul Lindahl Post 9024; State Cmdr. Curt Hermanson; Kevin Kehn Post 1210;  
and Todd Roberts Post 8731.

Standing (l to r) Lee Christopherson Post 7092; Dennis Maddox Post 5518.  
Missing Shannon Frost Post 4297; Todd Pederson 3289; John Olmscheid 2853;  
Ryan Johnson 6992; Lucas Billmeier Post 1639

## All-State Quartermasters



Seated (l to r) David Staehlin Post 8752; 2021 State Cmdr. Curt Hermanson;  
Jim Murtaugh Post 1210; and Darrin Ewing Post 9024.  
Missing John Lawrence Post 6992; Ron Widell Post 8731



# FOLDS of HONOR

By Nathan Pike, Project Coordinator

Comrades and Auxiliary members of the VFW Department of Minnesota.

Before our great organization is a new VFW year for programs, activities and the all important Commander and Presidents project. This year Cmdr. Barry and President Jamie are working together to raise money for Folds of Honor. It is a non-profit organization that provides educational scholarships to spouses and children of America's fallen and disabled service-members.

Folds of Honor's educational scholarships support private education tuition and/or tutoring for children in grades K-12 as well as higher education tuition assistance for spouses and dependents. Higher education can include traditional two or four learning institutions and non-traditional vocational or trade schools.

Every Department conference and event is an opportunity

to bring money to support the Commanders project.

This Department has a rich history of taking care of those who have taken care of this country or paid with their blood to keep our Republic free, the least we can do for our fallen is to take care of their spouses and their children.

I challenge each member, Post and District to come up with ideas to raise money and get the money to Department headquarters. For sure be ready for the Parade of Checks at our Fall and Midwinter conference banquets.

If you have read my past articles in the Gopher Oversea'r, you know the message is quite simple: help support the Commanders and Presidents project for Folds of Honor Minnesota.

For additional information and educating yourself on Folds of Honor Minnesota check out: <https://minnesota.foldsofhonor.org/>

## COUNCIL - Cont. from Page 6

efforts your monthly gifts are making possible, and a Year End Tax Receipt mailed by the end of January. If you are interested in joining Partners in Patriotism, you may contact Donor Services in the VFW Development Department at 1.833.VFW.GIVE (1.833.839.4483) or email at [partners@vfw.org](mailto:partners@vfw.org) with "Partners in Patriotism Application" in the subject line.

## DIST 5 AUX. - Cont. from Page 9

classmate of mine from kindergarten to 12th grade. I look forward to what District 5 will do for VITO this year!

Our first district meeting will be September 19th in Willmar. The second meeting will be January 9th in Starbuck. Our third and final meeting for the year will be April 24th in Osakis. I am looking forward to productive meetings and great visits from our Department officers! I am eagerly waiting for Fall Conference in Willmar in September as well. I enjoy the workshops and all the information that comes from them. I am always ready to learn, and Fall Conference always gives me an opportunity to do that.

I am excited and nervous as my year begins as District 5 President, and I am looking forward to being the representative of the fantastic auxiliaries of the district. They work hard each year, and I am anticipating awesome things they will do for our veterans, current service members, their families, our youth, and our communities!

## MARES - Cont. from Page 1

National appointments.

Bob was employed by Early American Life Insurance Company for thirty years. During that time, he was their Executive Vice President of Administration. He was appointed Secretary of the Board of Directors and Investment Committee. He began his employment as an internal and traveling auditor. He was then transferred to the Policy Service Department, including Death Claims, Policy Loans, Policy surrenders and underwriting. He also served as their Company Treasurer and Vice President.

Mares graduated from Cretin High School in 1943 and attended the University of Minnesota from 1946 to 1952.

Bob married Laurel Conrad on August 2, 1947. Laurel supported him in all of his VFW endeavors with her presence at many VFW functions. Bob is survived by his two daughters, Linda Schmidt, Teresa Burke and Grandson Daniel Schmidt. They reside in Albert Lea, Minnesota.

Bob loved his golf and bowling! He never hesitated to invite you over to his house after a game of golf for dinner or just to talk. A quiet and decisive man, he never hesitated to give you a call or write you a letter. He would always tell you when you were doing a good job... AND, he made suggestions if you were headed down the 'wrong path'. Bob was a mentor to many Vietnam Veterans and he can take some credit for the success of the Department of Minnesota VFW through that mentoring. Like many of our Past State Commanders --- Bob's Leadership will be missed!

## Hats on the Hill

by Rick Stoehr



Pictured above (l to r): Past Dept. Cmdr. Dave Adams, Senator Mary Kiffmeyer, Aux. Legislative Chair Julie Stoehr and Dist 8 Cmdr. Rick Stoehr



Pictured above: Aux. Legislative Chair Julie Stoehr pins Poppy on Senator Warren Limmer

The MN Veterans Administration Commander's Task Force informed us at the State Convention that they were looking for volunteers on June 14 to participate in the "Hats on the Hill" at the Minnesota State Capitol. This coincided with the opening of another special session open to the public.

Dept. Auxiliary Legislative Chair Julie Stoehr and I were already in the Metro area so we decided to stay another night. We met Past Dept. Cmdr. Dave Adams and Tommy Johnson to hand out Poppies and remind the State's



Pictured above (l to r): Past Dept. Cmdr. Dave Adams, Senator John Hoffman, Legislative Chair Julie Stoehr, Senator Jim Abeler, and Dist. 8 Cmdr Rick Stoehr

Senators and Representatives that we were there. We wanted them to know that the Veterans Restorative Justice Act was part of the Omnibus Bill and that they would be addressing.

Overall, we were very well received but it was an eye opener and a bit disturbing to see the number of people who claim to be supportive of Veterans that declined a Poppy. We left the Rotunda with somewhat mixed emotions but a guardedly optimistic feeling that we would soon see a bill in the Governors hands for his signature.

The Legislators finally saw the light, came to an agreement and on June 30th the Governor signed the Veterans Restorative Justice Act into law! It was a 3-year battle to get the VRJA passed but this is a perfect illustration of what can happen when we Veterans and Auxiliaries join together to support one another.

## JUDGE - Cont. from Page 3

the Department general orders, visit the members-only area at [mnvfw.org](http://mnvfw.org), or reach out to me at [david@stahlin.us](mailto:david@stahlin.us) for details.

Lastly, I would like to touch on the VFW's reputation where people may see us as not very welcoming, a sometimes accurate opinion, unfortunately. Many of us have either experienced this ourselves or have spoken with those who have experienced it and sadly, I still hear stories of it happening today.

Whether we're considering applications for membership; serving veterans, their families, and our communities; or working with our employees and other partners, we need to welcome and be respectful of others. It's never appropriate to act aloof or to treat anyone with disrespect regardless of their branch of service, military specialty, length of service, conflict, age, gender, race, sexual orientation, political opinions, or religious affiliation (or lack thereof).

Like the population of our country, our VFW membership, the veterans we serve, and their families are remarkably diverse. Treating everyone with respect will not only make it easier to recruit and keep members and to fulfill our mission, but more importantly, it's the right thing to do.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE**

## DIST 2 AUX. - Cont. from Page 8

continue to do as you mentor your successors and/or serve again. Your 2021-2022 team is here for you in whatever way you need, just contact us at any time.

I encourage all Auxiliaries to participate in the Department programs; Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen, Americanism contests, etc. Now is the time to contract your schools and provide them with information about these programs.

The Second District meeting will be October 2 in Chaska, Post 1791.

Communication is key to the success of our organization. I am asking all of you in the Second District to please send your email addresses to [jkeogh234@gmail.com](mailto:jkeogh234@gmail.com) to be included in future notifications.

Please support our 2nd District joint project: the Armed Forces Service Center. Your Auxiliary Presidents will be receiving details soon. "Sailing Together to Support our Veterans"

## DIST 4 AUX. - Cont. from Page 8

Our remaining District meetings are: October 16 at Cottage Grove (Red Barn); January 15 at N. St. Paul Post; April 24 at Roseville Post Memorial Service & Convention.

I would like to see and meet more Auxiliary members at the District meetings. I would like to see many members at the Department Fall Conference September 24 - 26 in Willmar, MN.

# Veterans / Youth Activities

## Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen

by Ken Schroepfer

Comrades and Auxiliary members, now is the time to start two of the VFW's most important Programs, VOD/PP. Last year we were challenged by COVID-19. This year every post needs to visit with the your local schools and their teachers and students to let them know that both programs are alive and well. Inform them that we want their thoughts to be captured for this year's themes on a recording and on paper.

The themes are, "America – Where Do We Go From Here?" for Voice of Democracy and "How Can I Be A Good American?" for Patriot's Pen respectively. Two meaningful themes that could not be more relevant in these unprecedented times.

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

If you do not have applications, they are easily available on-line at VFW Voice of Democracy Application 2021-2022 and VFW Patriot's Pen Application 2021-2022. And remember as in the past, Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2021.



**2021 - 2022 Voice of Democracy Theme**

**"America - Where Do We Go From Here?"**



**2021 - 2022 Patriot's Pen Theme**

**"How Can I Be A Good American?"**

Entries are Due at Local V.F.W. Posts by October 31st, 2021

## FALL CONTESTS

### SCHOLARSHIPS



#### Senior High Scholarship (Grades 9-12)

#### Voice of Democracy Audio Essay Competition

**ENTER:** Students write & record a 3-5 minute essay addressing this year's theme. (See Application for Details- VFW General Order or at <http://www.mnvfw.org/voice-of-democracy>)

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

**DEADLINE:** Entries due to local V.F.W. Post by October 31 each year

#### Middle School Scholarship (Grades 6-8)

#### Patriot's Pen Essay Competition

**ENTER:** Students write a 300-400 word typed essay addressing this year's theme.

(See Application for Details- VFW General Order or at <http://www.mnvfw.org/patriot-pen>)

**DEADLINE:** Entries due to the local V.F.W. Post no later than October 31 each year

### COMMUNITY



#### VFW Teacher of the Year (See Your VFW Post or VFW General Orders for Details)

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

(See *Nomination Form for Details- VFW General Orders* or <http://www.vfw.org/TeacheroftheYear/>)

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

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

**DEADLINE:** Entries are due to the local V.F.W. Post no later than

## VETERANS UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

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

### Archery

2022  
Open for Bids

### Bean Bag

2022  
Open for Bids

### Bowling

2022  
Hosted by Sauk Rapids #6692

### Cribbage

October 9, 2021  
Hosted by Austin #1216

2022  
Open for Bids

**Fishing**  
2021 & 2022  
Hosted by Austin #1216

**Golf**  
September 10 - 12, 2021  
Hosted by Cannon Falls #4452

### Horseshoes

2022  
Open for Bids

### Pistol

2022  
Open for Bids

### Trap Shooting

2022  
Open for Bids

## YOUTH UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

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

### VFW STATE BASEBALL

**August 12-15, 2021  
State Tournament**  
Hosted by Austin #1216

### August 2022 & 2023 State Tournament

Co-hosted by Fergus Falls #612  
and Dilworth #1223

### VFW STATE HOCKEY

**2022 State Tournament**  
Hosted by Dilworth #1223

**2023 State Tournament**  
Open for Bids

**Contact Your District  
Veterans Activity Chairman  
if your Post would like to Bid to Host an Event**

## 2021 VFW State Pistol Competition Survives COVID and Ammo Shortage

by Jim Hesselgrave, VFW Post 5518

Registration for the pistol competition opened at Target Sports in Rogers, Minnesota on Sunday, April 18. A total of nineteen (19) 'shooters' signed in for the three levels of competition with some participants electing to shoot more than one level. Coffee and rolls were available.

All participants were briefed on the Rules of the Range and how the Competition would be conducted by representatives of Target Sports.

Lunch was served at 11:00 am followed by awards presentations at noon. Door Prizes were drawn with all shooters leaving with at least one memento of the Competition.

#### Winners, post and scores:

.22 caliber Level	– First Place, Chris Bengtson Post 1215 (600) Second Place; John Metzdorff Post 5145 (581) Third Place, Mike Williams Post 1647 (560).
Open Level	– First Place, Chris Bengtson Post 1215 (602) Second Place, John Metzdorf Post 5145 (582) Third Place, Dennis Maddox Post 5518 (547).
OPTICS/ ASSISTED	First Place, Dennis Maddox Post 5518 (642) Second Place, Chris Bengtson Post 1215 (583) Third Place John Metzdorff Post 5145 (582).

Thanks go out Target Sports of Rogers, Minnesota for cooperating with the VFW on this competition. We would also like to thank them for the MANY Great Door Prizes provided by their Vendors.

# Purple Cross<sup>SM</sup>

## Funeral Plans for Veterans

Purple Cross has been serving America's Veterans since 1948 and continues to offer the best funeral plans available. With **Funeral Preplanning** –you:

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- Protect your family from financial burden in time of grief
- gain peace of mind by knowing your funeral is taken care of.

**Yes, I would like to know more about:**

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**Absolutely no obligation!**

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 City/State: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Minnesota VFW Riders

By Jon "Gutterball" Durst



Hello everyone. Riding season is at its peak throughout the state, and I want to remind everyone that the VFW Riders are out on the road forming groups and recruiting members.

There are currently Riders chapters in Monticello, Rochester, and Cottage Grove. Any VFW or Auxiliary member in good standing who rides a motorcycle can join anyone of these groups. If your Post or District wants to start your own chapter, the process is, relatively, simple, and painless. I, and any Riders member, are more than happy

to help in any way possible to get you up and running.

You can support the MN VFW Riders by participating in the Statewide Passport Run happening now until September 1st or checking out Riders events happening this Summer. The VFW Riders 8731 are hosting their 4th Annual SummerFest Ride on Saturday August 21st. Information can be found in the General Orders and on Facebook by searching "VFW Riders MN." Feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have, and I hope to see you on the road!



Four members of Lake City Post 8729 preparing the flag for raising at the Minnesota Twins baseball game on July 7. The Twins are very supportive of all of our military veterans.

Pictured are (l to r) Tom Harkins, Cliff Reynolds, John Peters and Jon Gravenish. Good buddies and Vietnam vets.

## Cootie Corner

By Jim "Fatman" Dalziel  
 Commander of the Grand of MN

Here we go again, Part II as Fatman as the Grand Commander for the Military Order of the Cooties for the Grand of MN.

Due to COVID-19, and a lot of Lousiness, we have held over the majority of Officers for the Grand. We will be holding our first C of A in Dilworth on August 21st. It will be held at VFW Post 1223. It will be great to see everyone again.

The Supreme Convention is still being held in Overland Park KS for August 3-7. Our Grand has always been greatly represented at all Cootie Supreme Conventions and events due to the Supreme Color Guard being from MN. Lousy Job Gentlemen.

We had our first big event here in MN at the Hastings Veterans Home. Pup Tent #2 led the Charge helping pull off a great Cootie Picnic. The head of Voluntary Services, a fellow Cootie Sue Registrar, has been working hard to ensure the welfare of these Veterans. She put together

a great event for them. They are always looking for Lousy Volunteers and donations in Hastings.

The National Home is looking for some help!! You know, The National Home, originally started from an idea at a Cootie Supreme Convention. They need a new plow truck. Cost is \$43,000.00. Donations can be made to the MOC Supreme Headquarters Attention Gary Dressel.

It was great meeting everyone at the State Convention. We hope to start a new infestation in the southwest part of MN. Remember, our purpose is to "Keep Them Smiling in Beds of White". These are difficult times to volunteer. You might not be allowed where we used to be, that just means we have to be inventive.

Look for those new Lousy Cooties, "Increase and Multiply".

Enjoy Your Cootie Milk and hope to see everyone in Dilworth or Wilmar, recruiting table will be up and answering any and all questions.

### LEGISLATIVE - Cont. from Page 6

housing unstable veterans and their families. Memorial Day planning is underway. Rep. Phillips will participate in the wreath laying ceremony at Ft. Snelling and the Chaska Memorial Day event. He also plans to introduce several bills at that time. More details will be forthcoming.

#### 4th District Representative – Betty McCollum

Rep. McCollum chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, which recently held hearings. She looks forward to the forthcoming release of the president's budget. Connie Haddeland recently attended the National Guard's breakfast briefing at the 34th Infantry's division headquarters on the Arden Hills Army Training Site. She also participated in two days of Army casework training during the first week of May, which involved participants from the VA and the National Personnel Records Center. Regrettably, there are over 220,000 requests for documents or information. The center is working

on developing remote and scanning capabilities with the VA. Progress on the service academy nominations continues. Several are being commissioned for each academy as they graduate in May.

#### 7th District Representative – Michelle Fischbach

Rep. Fischbach cosponsored HR 1448, the Paws For Veterans Therapy Act. The veterans homes in Montevideo and Bemidji were also recently funded. We have been doing outreach with the VSOs and other local veteran groups to learn how to best serve the veterans of our district. Casework has also been a high priority.

#### 8th District Representative – Pete Stauber

Rep. Stauber recently went on a tour of the St. Cloud VA and reviewed a number of the priorities there, including ensuring the healthcare in the district remains as good as it has been and also improving access through telehealth and mileage reimbursements. He also cosponsored HR 1448.

### SR. VICE - Cont. from Page 3

all comrades to begin early this year contacting all annual dues members and ask them to renew immediately. Review membership and recruiting materials to be prepared to answer the question that should never be asked, "What's in it for me?" An All-American Department achieving 100% plus 1 in membership and a 10% increase in our Community Service efforts is certainly attainable if we all make a concerted effort to contribute.

Use the success stories of Minnesota National Voice of

Democracy winner Erin Stoekig and 4th place National Patriots Pen winner Julianna Stacey to promote these programs in your local schools. If the schools decline to participate, host an informational event at your post to inform parents of these tremendous programs with their opportunities to earn scholarship dollars. How many parents would say No to scholarships for their children?

I am looking forward to another successful year working with our districts, posts, and auxiliaries to serve veterans, our active forces and their families. Stay safe and lend a hand to those in need.

# Timely Tidbits

## VFW Post Website

### Telling the Story on the Internet

By Mark Persons, Webmaster VFW Post 1647, Brainerd

As mentioned in the last Oversea'r, writing and maintaining a website is easy and cost less than \$180/year. No professionals were hired to create and manage the Brainerd Post 1647 website. It is strictly a volunteer effort. I am a 74-year-old Army Vietnam veteran who has no web writing training, just an interest in doing a volunteer job at my post. You can do this for your post as well. Easy to follow how-to instructions can be found at: <https://www.brainerdvfw.org/web-writing.html>.

As you know, websites are "information resources" where post members, and the world, can be informed on what is happening in the organization. That especially applies to young our vets. They look online to see if you are "one of them" and will likely turn away if the perception is

old people at a drinking man's club.

Recent statistics show smartphones and tablets are well over 50% of the audience for websites. Mobile friendly is the name of the game nowadays. Sites need to look good on all devices. The Brainerd VFW made that conversion a few years ago and has never looked back.

National VFW has the Website Solution Program to help local posts get started with their own website. Signing onto the program is just a start. The basic structure needs to be customized to the post it belongs to. In addition, the site needs to be updated frequently by a post member so dated information is removed and new upcoming events are shown.

Think of a post website as inexpensive advertising. An outdated site is bad advertising. Don't let that happen at your post!

## ★★ WANTED ★★

### Memories, pictures and stories from "the Good Old Days of the VFW"

The Gopher Oversea'r is preparing a Special Edition to commemorate 75 years of service to the members of the Dept. of Minnesota VFW. If you have special memories and/or stories that you would like to share, please send them.

Remember, pictures tell great stories. However, the event and those in the photo need to be identified.

Send your memories, pictures and stories to the VFW Office, Rice Street Station, PO Box 17146, St. Paul, MN 55117 or by email to [vfwmnoffice@gmail.com](mailto:vfwmnoffice@gmail.com).

Please submit them before October 31, 2021  
Photos will be returned upon request.

## Still Active in Veteran's Programs



Paul Wojahn is still very active with Albert Nagel Post 1648 in New Ulm. He can also be found sorting and hanging clothes with the DAV and volunteering with the Marine Corps League and its programs.

The man knows how to keep busy!

If your Post has a Veteran from WWII, (a member of "the Greatest Generation"), the Gopher Oversea'r would love to hear about it.

Write a short story about your Veteran and include a photo ( see the sample article above) . We would be more than happy to publish it.

Send stories and photos to [vfwmnoffice@gmail.com](mailto:vfwmnoffice@gmail.com)

## MN State and National Parks

Find out more about these State and National Parks:

<https://www.exploreminnesota.com/list/21-incredible-minnesota-state-parks-region>

<https://www.exploreminnesota.com/article/6-spectacular-national-park-sites-minnesota>

# WORD SEARCH #11

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Blue Mounds  
Buffalo River  
Boundary Waters  
Cascade River  
Chippewa Forest  
Crosby Manitou  
Crow Wing  
Father Hennepin  
Gooseberry Falls  
Grand Portage

Great River Bluffs  
Interstate  
Itasca  
Jay Cooke  
Judge CR Magney  
Lake Maria  
Lake Superior  
Lake Vermillion  
Maplewood  
Minneopa

Mississippi River  
Pipestone  
Saint Croix  
Split Rock  
Superior Forest  
Temperance  
Tettegouche  
Voyageurs  
Zippel Bay

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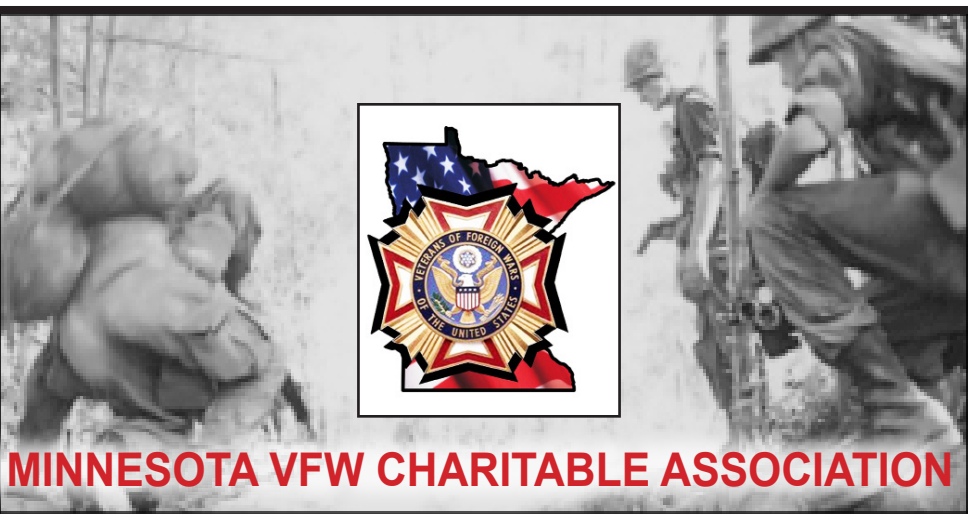
**2021  
MINNESOTA  
RETREATS**

**JUNE 18-20**  
Osprey Wilds near Sandstone, MN  
**OCTOBER 8-10**  
Ironwood Springs Ranch near Stewartville, MN  
**DECEMBER 3-5**  
Inspiration Point near Clitherall, MN



## National POW/MIA Recognition Day September 17th

Ever since Congress established National POW/MIA Recognition Day in 1979, veterans and families of missing veterans have gathered to remember America's unreturned POWs and MIAs. They pledge to live by the creed, 'You Are Not Forgotten.'



### 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

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  
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for special events at  
your Post,  
consider having Historical  
Experiences bring a  
history program to your  
membership.



These entertaining pro-  
grams are educational and patriotic. You can chose from a number of top-  
ics including:

- The Continental Soldier in the American Revolution**
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- 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 dedication 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...

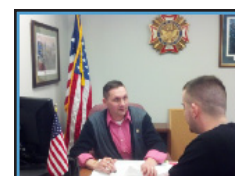
[arnkind@historicalexperiences.org](mailto:arnkind@historicalexperiences.org)

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!**

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.

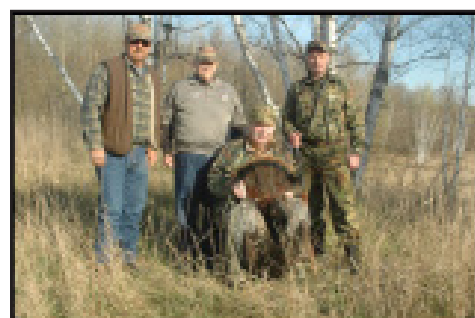


There are a number ways that you can Preserve the Memory of the Sacrifices of our Veterans for now and the future:

- 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