

GOPHER OVERSEAS

Volume 76, NO. 1

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

February 2022 - May 2022

Warroad and St. Louis Park on Top VFW 'A' and 'AA' Hockey Tournament

By Jim Hesselgrave, VFW State Hockey Chairman

The Two years ago, the VFW State Youth Activities Committee voted to eliminate the VFW District Playoffs from the VFW Hockey Program. This was due to a lack of District participation from over half of the VFW Districts. COVID 19 played a big part in the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 VFW State Hockey Tournaments. In 2022, the VFW Hockey Program got the 'kick-start' it needed to keep the Program alive with the advent of the VFW State Invitational Bantam Hockey

Tournament. In essence, this is the First VFW State Invitational Bantam Hockey Tournament since 1956 and 1957 – the first two years of VFW Hockey in Minnesota.

In 2019 an effort was made to bring back more Bantam Hockey Teams to the VFW Hockey Program. Our District and State Tournaments were divided into two classes (tournaments), 'A' and 'AA' Bantams. This was the first year of that experiment. If the 2019 VFW State Bantam Hockey Tournament is

an indication, the experiment was a SUCCESS! When Minnesota Hockey created a 'AA' Bantam classification, it made it difficult for 'A' Bantam Teams to compete in the VFW State Bantam Hockey Tournament, which invited both classifications to play. With that said, we lost a lot of 'A' Bantam Teams from the VFW Hockey Program. Thief River Falls VFW Post 2793 accepted the challenge of this split tournament. This required

HOCKEY - Cont. on Page 15



**2021-2022
State Commander
Barry Henriksen**

Member of
VFW Post 1782
White Bear Lake, MN

Where did the time go? It doesn't seem that long ago that I was installed as your State Commander. As you read this, we are preparing to elect and install my successor. Dale Hoogeveen will be a great state commander.

I want to thank all of you for your hospitality and support throughout the year. Everywhere I went throughout the year I felt welcomed. As I write this, I have attended many great events since Midwinter, and I will be at many more before we gather at the convention.

On February 2 I was at Post 1296 Everett McClay in Bloomington for a ceremony to recognize two US World War II veterans. The Czech Republic sent two officers to present medals for the liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945. Thank you, Doug Doerfler, for running a great event. It was emotional for the WW II veterans, the Czech officers, and everyone in attendance, including Dept. AQM Dewey Hermanson, and 7th District Commander Charles Hawkins. You might even find a picture of this and a few other events in this edition of the Overseas'r.

On Saturday February 26 Kris and I were at Post 1720 Grand Rapids

COMMANDER - Cont. on Page 10



Warroad

2022 VFW Class A Bantam Hockey Champions



St. Louis Park

2022 VFW Class AA Bantam Hockey Champions

State Convention June 9 - 12, 2022

By Cheryl Burton, VFW Office Manager

Despite the low numbers for our MidWinter Conference at the Downtown Marriott, those that attended had a wonderful time. Our VFW State Convention is about wrapping up our business, celebrating our accomplishments and planning for the 2022-23 year.

This year, our Convention will return to the Best Western Plus/Kelly Inn in St Cloud, MN. The host post is Granite Post #428, Dr. Jim Tuorila is the Commander. This a comfortable property with plenty of space to meet up with old and new friends alike. Upon arrival you can take

advantage of a variety of restaurants and shopping near the hotel.

THURSDAY

The busy weekend starts off with training and learning opportunities for any VFW member interested. The VFW will hold the Annual Officers Training Institute (OTI.) where attendees can choose from two classes: 1) Commander's class which covers leadership, programs and procedures; 2) Quartermaster's class which details the financial procedures, audits and policies. The Auxiliary will hold their Auxiliary Training Seminar (ATS.) where they

will detail programs, Bylaws and Leadership. That evening, the VFW and AUX Council of Administration meetings will be held to summarize and close any business for 2021-22 year.

FRIDAY

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

STATE CONV - Cont. on Page 7

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Save The Date!! Upcoming VFW Events

<p>Minnesota Veterans' Day on the Hill April 20, 2022</p> <p>State Convention & Training Schools June 8-12, 2022 Best Western Kelly Inn St. Cloud</p>	<p>VFW National Convention July 16-21, 2022 Kansas City</p>	<p>VFW State Baseball Tournament August 3-6, 2022 Dilworth & Fergus Falls</p> <p>Fall Conference September 23-25, 2022 Crown Plaza-Plymouth</p>
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****Red Events are Department Events****

Top News

** Official Notice **

Proposed Bylaws & Resolutions

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

Additional Resolutions and Bylaw changes must be submitted (via postal mail or email) or faxed (651-291-2753) to the Department Headquarters and received no later than 4:30pm May 2, 2022. Bylaws and Resolutions submitted shall be specific and definite as to the Section, paragraph and line to be amended with exact wordings and deletions. Robert's Rules of Order allows Resolution and Bylaw changes to be amended if the amendments are within the scope of the proposed change.

The Department Judge Advocate is available to assist with the wording of a proposed change before it is submitted. Contact David Staehlin via email at david@staehlin.us

Proposed Bylaws and Resolution changes will be voted on at the State Convention in St. Cloud June 8-12, 2022.

VFW Day of Service

from www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases

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

The VFW Day of Service is an outgrowth of the organization's #StillServing campaign launched in 2020 to recognize the ongoing dedication of veterans and service members who continue to serve their communities. VFW Day of Service, led by veterans and in concert with other organizations and civic groups, is open for anyone to participate. The inaugural VFW Day of Service kicks off the first Saturday in May (May 7), marking the start of veteran-led community service projects to take place throughout the month.

"The positive feedback from VFW members and the communities we serve tells us the stage is set to expand our #StillServing initiative," said Fritz Mihelcic, VFW national commander. "We have already seen how the campaign amplifies the

volunteer efforts and camaraderie of America's veterans. The time is now to take its visibility to the next level."

Veterans are more likely than civilians to volunteer in their communities, according to a recent civic health survey of veterans. The same study showed veterans donate to charities, register to vote, and are involved in their communities and local government at a greater rate than their civilian counterparts.

"We are calling on all VFW Posts and members across America and around the world to join in the VFW Day of Service by planning an activity for May 7, or at another point during the month, to show that we never stop serving" said Mihelcic.

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

Convention Committee

By Dave Adams, Convention Committee Chair

The Convention Committee consists of a Convention Director, up to two Assistant Convention Directors, Auxiliary Liaison and the VFW Office Manager. Permanent members of the Convention Committee are the Department Commander, Department Senior Vice Commander, Department Junior Vice Commander and the Department Adjutant.

Duties of the Convention Committee are detailed in the Statement of Financial Policy, therefore, I will not elaborate further in this article. What I would like to address is the time and work this committee puts into ensuring the VFW and Auxiliary members get the best service at Convention and Conferences. The importance of attendance is vital in order to receive the best rates for lodging, meeting room space and the banquets.

Each contract has financial responsibilities that MUST be met, when it is not met there are financial ramifications. Negotiations for each of the site contracts are of the highest priority for this Committee. Contracts are negotiated at least two years prior to the event. All contracts are given to the Council of Administration for approval/disapproval. The recent bylaw change mandates two signatures required on the site contracts from the Department: The Commander and Quartermaster.

The importance of attending banquets cannot be stressed enough! First, as respect to Department Commander and Auxiliary President and then to show our support and

gratitude to the VOD and Patriot's Pen students at Midwinter. Another reason to attend Midwinter is our housing, food/beverage commitment that must be met in order to receive reduced rates for meeting space and information technology (IT) for both VFW and Auxiliary. Nothing is free! Many of you have booked a space for weddings or other social events and you, no doubt, were shocked to see the cost of the site and dinner!

For 51 years, I have been a VFW member and much has changed in the course of those years. In the past conventions and conferences, we traveled to East Grand Forks, International Falls, Moorhead, Duluth, Rochester, Albert Lea, Mankato and probably more that I cannot remember. Our mission has been always the same, "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living" and "No One Does More for Veterans". PLEASE continue to show your support by attending these events.

In closing, I wish to thank the Convention Committee members, Department Office Staff and the VFW and Auxiliary line officers for your continued support. Most of all, I want to thank the VFW and Auxiliary membership as we cannot accomplish our mission without you! "Always Forward"

**THANK YOU
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Department Headquarters News

Senior Vice Commander

By Dale Hoogveen, State Senior Vice Commander

Greetings comrades, brothers and sisters.

Another year is rapidly coming to an end as we prepare for state convention with officers training institute, elections, and installation of officers. I thank all who attended Midwinter Conference as we bade farewell to Marriott Minneapolis City Center. The facility was wonderful meeting all our needs for VFW and auxiliary training sessions and the staff always treated us with the utmost courtesy and respect. The challenge of driving in downtown Minneapolis, the expense for parking and other concerns prompted us to end that relationship and we look forward to conducting our 2022 Midwinter Conference in Brooklyn Park. The highlight of Midwinter Conference is the presentation of our Voice of Democracy winner and this year was notable for the return of our district winners and their families to be honored at the banquet on Saturday evening. We were also honored to have representatives of Commander Henriksen and President Cassavant's project, Folds of Honor, join us and experience the camaraderie of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary. Fund raising efforts have been phenomenal and the parade of checks put the generosity of our posts and members on display in stunning fashion.

I recently had the opportunity to tour the United Heroes League headquarters in Hastings, MN. President, Founder and fellow veteran Shane Hudella graciously shared their mission as we toured a facility filled with sports equipment. That equipment is given to current service members, honorably discharged veterans who have been deployed to a combat zone and their children under 18 years old. United Heroes League

has been tremendously successful relying on individual and corporate donations to provide the equipment and other outdoor opportunities at no cost to the participants. UHL is a 501.c.(3) charitable organization. Visit unitedheroesleague.org to see what you can do to help!

As Loyalty Day approaches, I encourage each member in good standing to consider filling an elected or appointed position at your post, district, or the Department. This organization relies on the talent and effort of many volunteers to manage our programs, to provide athletic, scouting and civic opportunities for the youth in our communities and to conduct the business of the VFW in accordance with our bylaws and procedures. The Department Finance Committee will have one position for election, the VFW Charitable Association will have two director positions to fill and the election for Judge Advocate should never be unopposed! We have many talented comrades in our Department, I encourage you to share that talent and expertise.

I am looking forward to Sr Vice Training in Kansas City at the end of April. Unfortunately, that coincides with the 8th District Loyalty Day events being held at Veterans on the Lake Resort and I will not be able to attend as the Department Representative. My thanks to Chief of Staff Dave Adams for taking this event.

I hope to see many of you at State Convention in June in St Cloud followed by National Convention in Kansas City. Continue to work hard to serve veterans, their families and your communities. Membership should always be a priority as we continue to work to achieve 100%. Stay safe!

Junior Vice Commander

By Dan Meyer, State Junior Vice Commander

Greetings Comrades

I hope this finds you well. We have had an interesting winter with the weather and the things that are going on in the USA and around the world, but there is one thing we are not doing very well I think. It is important that we help take care of our fellow veterans. There are still way too many committing suicide. There are a lot better options. If you know of or meet a fellow veteran, ask if they need any help or guidance.

There are different programs and various solutions to their problems out there. Steer them to the resources.

The weather is getting better and life is good. Together we can make this world a better place.

In closing if you are thinking about taking a leadership position in the VFW please do so. It is a very rewarding job. If you think it is too hard, we have an opportunity at OTI at the start of convention, to help you be a success.

Judge Advocate

By David Staehlin, State Judge Advocate

Comrades, as the weather begins to warm and snow begins to melt, we enter into another season of nominations and elections. The selection of officers at all levels shouldn't be just a formality or task on a to-do list.

Use care to elect and appoint comrades who have a passion for the position and our organization. For younger veterans, holding office and effectively fulfilling the duties of the office is a great way to develop or hone skills that may be useful in your career and in other areas of life. Be sure to include these leadership positions on your resume if the skills are at all transferable to the employment position you seek.

Junior Vice Commanders and Senior Vice Commanders should ideally be comrades who aspire to become Commander. Commanders, a critical responsibility of yours is to actively train your Junior and Senior Vice Commanders to be a Commander. Involve them in the decision making and leadership of

your unit. Appoint them as chairman of a committee or two. Invite them to sit in on your House and Gambling committee meetings if you have those. Provide them with copies of the VFW Podium edition, which includes the National Bylaws, Manual of Procedure, and Ritual. Provide your unit bylaws and a copy of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, In Brief (3rd ed.)*.

I've heard it said that a Commander may need to serve for two years where the first year is a 'learning year.' Instead, follow the original intent of having Junior and Senior Vice Commanders: prepare them so when they step into the position of Commander, they hit the ground running.

Have a wonderful Spring. Thank you for all you do to serve your comrades, fellow veterans, their families, and the community.

And many thanks to our wonderful Sisters and Brothers of the VFW Auxiliary. We are forever grateful for your love and support.

Quartermaster/Adjutant

By Dewey Hermanson, Dept. Quartermaster/Adjutant

Just a reminder, ALL District Officers (by invitation) will have a Special REQUIRED Session at the Officers Training School on June 8, 6:00-8:30pm. There will be NO exceptions.

Thursday, June 9, is reserved for Post Officer training. There is one session for Commanders, Sr. and Jr.

Vice Commanders and Adjutants and a second session for Quartermasters and Trustees. Both sessions start off with registration (7:00am - 8:15am) followed by classes from 8:00am -4:00pm. Lunch is from noon - 1:00pm. ALL Adjutants are highly encouraged to attend these classes with your Commanders.

MN VFW Charitable Association

By Ken Schroeffer, Association President

The Charitable Association would like to thank all of the posts that sold 2022 calendars. There were a total of 8045 calendars sold. This is the largest number calendars that have been sold over the past five years.

At the end of January, 2022, the Association returned \$40,225 to the posts as their share of the calendars sold.

Work has already begun on the 2023 year calendar. This year it will feature photos of our National Monuments. Post order forms are included in the April Dept. General Orders As in the past, they will be available for pick up by posts at the Department Convention.

The Association has had one

request for support so far this year. It received a letter asking for a donation to help support the Univ. of MN Army ROTC program for their Norwegian Foot March event on April 24 at the Arden Hills Army Training Site in Arden Hills, MN. The request was approved and a check in the amount of \$2,000 was presented.

Regarding the Commanders Project, "Folds of Honor", the Association is accepting checks from those posts or individuals who are unable to participate in the Parade of Checks at the Convention Banquet. Their donations will be acknowledged at a later date. Make check payable to the **MN VFW Charitable Association**. Note in the memo are: **Folds of Honor**.

Community Service

By Dan Meyer, Department Community Activities Chairman

Comrades, we in the MN VFW are on track to surpass our dollars for community service donated back to your communities. Right now, we are at \$2,641,159.70. That is a great accomplishment for our posts and auxiliaries. Can you imagine what that number would be if every post and auxiliary would report everything they are doing for their communities. I know that there are some posts with no reports and some

with just a couple of reports. We are doing a great job but there is always room for improvement.

With the weather getting better, we can get out and help our fellow veterans and our communities in general. Let's make the world a better place and report what we are doing. It might just help in membership also.

Have a great spring and summer.

Minnesota Auxiliary News

**STATE PRESIDENT
VFW Auxiliary**



**Jamie
Cassavant**

Member of
VFW Post 1902 Auxiliary
Red Lake Falls, MN



has so many amazing mentors who willingly step up to assist our members, auxiliaries, districts, and our Department in so many ways.

Department Convention is scheduled for June 9-12, 2022, in St. Cloud MN. We have business to complete, and we will celebrate our successes, recognize our contest winners, have our Election of Officers for 2022 - 2023 and so much more.

A huge thank you to the VFW Auxiliary on all levels. It has been an honor to work with everyone and I extend my appreciation to the VFWA Department, Districts and Auxiliaries.

Commander Barry, it has been a privilege working with you this year as well as everyone in the VFW Department, Districts and Posts.

In our VFW and VFW Auxiliary family – we are helpful, we achieve goals, we are patient, we work together, we are successful, we are friends, we have fun, we are courteous, and we are a team.

Thank you everyone for all that you have done and continue to do for our Posts and Auxiliaries and members this year! You helped make this a very rewarding and fun year.

“Soaring Above and Beyond by Serving Our Heroes and Their Families”

Greetings!

Spring is getting close – winter is on its way out. After the crazy wind and snow this winter, I think we are all looking forward to the sun shining, the grass growing and maybe even “mosquitoes”? This year moved us forward again. It was full of challenges, but we all need to be very proud of our accomplishments and our dedication to the mission of the VFW Auxiliary.

Year-end reports are being worked on and I am really looking forward to hearing what our membership has accomplished this year. So many auxiliaries have found new ways, new projects, new ideas of how to accomplish the support of our veterans, military, and their families.

In visiting the different districts this year, I have learned so much from the auxiliaries. Your dedication to our organization is something very special. We need to keep moving forward and seeing how much is being done in Minnesota says that we are doing the best that we can. We may be taking “baby steps” but as long as we are stepping up and going forward, we will succeed.

We have had so many good things happen as well as challenges, conflicts and struggles to help with again this year. The VFW Auxiliary

National District Council

By Frankie Bill, Member Area E

Comrades and Members, we are in the home stretch of the 2021/2022 VFW Auxiliary Program year. Alongside you, I look forward to the recognition of outstanding hardwork across Minnesota. There are so many of you who volunteer as members, auxiliaries, the nine districts, and at the department level. Congratulations across each and every level of the organization. I am anxious to see Minnesota shine when the National Convention reconvenes in Kansas City, MO in July 2022.

The National Midyear



Pictured above (l to r): Nat'l VFW Cmdr-in-Chief, Fritz Mihelcic; NDCM Area Frankie Bill; Nat'l Auxiliary President Jean Hamil

Conference was held in Melbourne, FL back in January 2022. Points of interest from the National Council of Administration meeting included greetings from the National VFW Commander-in-Chief, Fritz Mihelcic and an introduction to the newest Executive Director, Mike Wilson, who represents the National VFW Home for Children. Also discussed were the financials covering investments, operating budget, and audits of the National organization. As Minnesota's representative on the Council, I was pleased to see fiscal responsibility and participate in the business motions. We also heard from candidates who are

campaigning for the position of National Guard at the 2022 National Convention. All three members are from the Western Conference: Kim Harney from Arizona, Joyce Bilyeu from California, and Jeanette Garcia from New Mexico. All-in-all, healthy business was conducted and program updates shared during the conference.

Please join Commander Barry and President Jaime for their Department Convention in St. Cloud. They will be closing out their term and handing over the reins to their respective successors. These leaders have done a fine job of continuing to navigate the coronavirus protocols. They have maintained open communication between the VFW and Auxiliary and each have an up-and-coming team ready to continue the good work. The past two years have shown moments of highs and equal moments of lows. However, we are safely coming to the end of the pandemic and shifting to



Pictured above (l to r): MN Delegation: Jordan Bauch, Frankie Bill, Sonia Tatge, Twyla Bauch-Scotfield, Laurie Dale, Dave Scotfield, Jamie Cassavant, Bonnie Keller

an endemic era. No, we may never get back to the way things were, but we have all learned new skills and found creative ways to do things in a constructive and at times, effective way, together for Veterans, their families, and the communities.

Well done Minnesota.

Treasurer/Secretary Chair

By Laurie Dale

Hello Everyone

As we prepare to wrap up the old year and plan for the new year, please be aware of several deadlines that you must adhere to.....

- Auxiliary Presidents respond to Dept. President Jamie's Membership letter by April 10.
- Please respond to your assigned officer as noted in the letter
- Department Delegate/Alternate/Pre-Registration Form/Fees received at Dept. Office by May 13.
- ATS Registration to Dept. VFW Office by May 16.

- 45 Plus Members Recognition Form to Dept. Office by May 16.
- Installation & Warrant Report Form received at Dept. Office by June 1.

SECOND QUARTER AUDIT: This Audit covers the months of April, May and June and must be completed by July 31 and received in the Department Office no later than August 31 Annually. This Audit should have both outgoing and incoming Treasurers and Trustees in attendance. The outgoing Trustees are the ones that conduct and sign this Audit. New Trustees are there

to observe and to learn. We ask the outgoing officers to mentor these new officers, especially if they have never completed an Audit before. It is helpful if the new officers are given the opportunity to also fill out the forms to make sure they can find the information needed to properly complete an Audit.

Attending State Convention

Auxiliary National Representative

Leona McDermott

National Chief-of-Staff & Mentoring for Leadership Ambassador 2021-2022



Leona McDermott of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida currently serves the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) Auxiliary as the 2021-2022 National Chief-of-Staff/Mentoring for Leadership Ambassador.

A Life Member of Donald A. Ross Auxiliary 9610 in Lake Park, Florida she joined on the eligibility of her husband Jack, who served in the United States Navy from 1966 to 1970 in Vietnam.

Leona has served the organization in many capacities, including as Auxiliary and District President, Department (state) Secretary for multiple years, numerous Department and National Chairmanships, National District Council member and Southern Conference Membership Coach.

She enjoys traveling the world and experiencing different cultures, and spending time with her children and grandchildren.

**THANK
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Claims and Service Office Report

Jon Gohn, Claims Director

VA Proposes to Add Rare Cancers Related to Environmental Exposure

March 1, 2022

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs intends to propose adding certain rare respiratory cancers to the list of presumed service-connected disabilities in relation to military environmental exposure to particulate matter.

VA determined through a focused review of scientific and medical evidence there is biologic plausibility between airborne hazards, specifically particulate matter, and carcinogenesis of the respiratory tract, and that the unique circumstances of these rare cancers warrant a presumption of service connection.

Based on these findings, VA's Secretary is proposing a rule that will add presumptive service connection for several rare respiratory cancers for certain Veterans. The cancers under consideration include:

- Squamous cell carcinoma of the larynx.
- Squamous cell carcinoma of the trachea.
- Adenocarcinoma of the trachea.
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the trachea.

- Adenosquamous carcinoma of the lung.
- Large cell carcinoma of the lung.
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the lung.
- Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the lung.
- Typical and atypical carcinoid of the lung.

"This is the right decision. The rarity and severity of these illnesses, and the reality that these conditions present a situation where it may not be possible to develop additional evidence prompted us to take this critical action," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "We'll continue to hold ourselves accountable to Veterans to provide more care, more benefits and more services to more Veterans than ever before."

VA intends to focus its rule on the rare respiratory cancers above in Veterans who served any amount of time in the Southwest Asia theater of operations and other locations. VA will invite and consider public comments as part of this process.

Once rulemaking is complete, VA will conduct outreach to impacted veterans and survivors to inform them about potential eligibility.

Chairman Takano Urges Members to Remember our Promise to Veterans

March 9, 2022

WASHINGTON — Today, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (D-Calif.) released the following statement after the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2471, an omnibus consisting of all 12 fiscal year 2022 appropriations bills and supplemental funding to support Ukraine. The omnibus includes three provisions advanced by the Committee to support our nation's veterans.

"Along with critically important funding to keep our government open and support Ukraine, the omnibus we just passed through the House includes three key bills advanced by our Committee," said Chairman Takano. "These provisions will ensure VA can competitively recruit and retain nurses and physician assistants, provide equity in burial for National Guard and Reserve Members, and increase funding for VA's sought after VET TEC Program.

"I'm proud that Democrats and Republicans came together to support \$13.6 billion in aid that is urgently needed for Ukraine. This expense is a necessary one, but let's not forget our unfinished business of caring for toxic-exposed veterans. When we make major funding decisions like these, we must remember that we have made promises to our servicemembers that we have not kept—that includes funding the healthcare and benefits we owe our veterans. We can both fund aid in Ukraine and support our veterans. These are not mutually exclusive—they only require the will of Congress.

I would hope that providing healthcare and benefits to veterans exposed to toxic substances on our watch is met with the same bipartisan urgency we saw tonight. Today's servicemembers and tomorrow's veterans need to know that we will not forget them once they get out."

The omnibus includes veterans provisions that will:

- Help VA competitively pay nurses and PAs (Rep. Underwood): Increases the maximum rate of basic pay for VA nurses and physician assistants, allowing VA to offer more competitive salaries to registered nurses, advance practice nurses, and physician assistants in high cost-of-living markets.
- Ensure equity in burial for National Guard and Reserve Members (Rep. Pappas): Would allow NCA to provide individual states the ability to decide who they choose to inter in their state veteran's cemeteries and removes any potential barrier for those states who may wish to open their application process. This ensures National Guard and Reserve members can be buried with fellow servicemembers.
- Increase funding for Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) (Rep. Levin): Increases funding in Fiscal Year 2022 for VET TEC from \$45 million to \$125 million due to the high demand and usage of the program. This allows VA to continue operating the program to the end of the fiscal year to provide more student veterans the chance to gain the high-tech skills sought by today's top employers.

VA Publishes Interim Final Rule for Suicide Prevention Grant Program

March 9, 2022

WASHINGTON — As part of the Department of Veterans Affairs' and national suicide prevention efforts, VA is publishing an Interim Final Rule March 10, 2022, implementing section 201 of the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act, known as the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program.

Publishing this rule will specify grant eligibility criteria, application requirements, scoring criteria, and other elements necessary to implement this grant program.

The SSG Fox SPGP is a three-year community-based grant program that will provide financial assistance to eligible entities to provide or coordinate the provision of suicide prevention services for eligible

individuals and their families.

"Communities play an important role in ending Veteran suicide," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "This grant program will invest in and seek to strengthen local community capacity to conduct outreach to Veterans, other eligible individuals, and their families and provide them with suicide prevention services and resources."

VA anticipates publishing a Notice of Funding Opportunity in April with instructions on how to apply for a grant under the SSG Fox SPGP. Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide prevention grants information.

The official version of this rule is scheduled to publish in the Federal Register March 10, 2022. However, the document is available for previewing.

Chairman Takano Comprehensive Honoring Our Pact Act

March 3, 2022

WASHINGTON — Today, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (D-Calif.) made the following statement after his comprehensive bill, H.R. 3967, as amended, the Honoring Our Promise To Address Comprehensive Toxics Act Of 2021 Or Honoring Our PACT Act, passed the House of Representatives with a bipartisan vote of 256-174. This legislation will finally treat toxic exposure as a cost of war by addressing the full range of issues impacting toxic-exposed veterans including access to earned benefits and healthcare through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It has the strong support of 42 Veterans Service Organizations, the Biden-Harris Administration, and advocates Jon Stewart And John Feal. "For too long, Congress and VA have been slow to act on toxic exposure—

but today, the House took a bipartisan vote to change that and finally make good on our promise to toxic-exposed veterans by passing my Honoring our PACT Act," said Chairman Takano. "After years of diligent input from toxic-exposed veterans, my colleagues, our staff, VA, and VSOs, we passed the most comprehensive legislation to date to treat toxic exposure as a cost of war and ensure that all toxic-exposed veterans can access the care and benefits they've earned. This fight is not over, but I will not rest until our veterans have a guarantee in statute that their government will take care of them when they come home—no matter the cost. I'm so grateful for the strong support from Speaker Pelosi, President Biden, and our dedicated VSOs and advocates, and I look

Veterans Claim Service

Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Bldg.
1 Federal Drive, Room G900, Saint Paul, MN 55111
Phone: (612)970-5669 FAX: (612)970-5404
email: vfw.vbaspl@va.gov

We'll Help with YOUR Veteran Benefits

CLAIMS - Cont. on Page 10

Message From Your National Council Member

By Tom Hanson,
National Council Member

Greetings to all and sundry!

I recently attended the spring VFW National Council meeting in Washington, DC. Sadly, the only members in attendance were the members of the Council. The VFW Commander-in-Chief's testimony relative to the VFW legislative mandates before the Joint Committee on Veterans Affairs was limited to five members. Consequently a decision was made to severely restrict attendance for the usual activities of the Washington Conference. The Voice of Democracy aspects of the Conference were also deferred and will be conducted as a VIRTUAL VOICE OF DEMOCRACY – PARADE OF WINNERS. The Parade of Winners awards ceremony will be on Thursday, April 7, at 7 PM. The ceremony will be streamed live on the VFW Facebook page. Additionally, if anyone is interested, a video of the Commander-in-Chief's testimony can be viewed on YouTube. Hopefully, one of these years our activities will resemble life as we once experienced it.

Aside from the routine administrative business of the Council, a few items of interest were also considered. The Council approved a measure for the Life Member payout account. Life members designated as A, B, or C will be paid \$10.50 (\$3.50 to the Post); D \$16.50 (\$5.50 to the Post); and E \$27.00 (\$9.00 to the Post). An announcement was also made on an earlier program (contest) that offered a reward to Posts that recruited new or reinstated life members. The indication was the first installments on these Membership grants will be paid from late March through June 2022.

The council approved a motion presented by the Awards and Citation Committee to re-write the awards structure of the organization. It was rationalized by the fact the current process was cumbersome and too voluminous. The new concept will consist of 5 different categories based on the principles of the VFW; fraternal, patriotic, historical, charitable, and educational. An additional award may recognize an exemplary legislator or an individual for Distinguished Service. Watch for details in future VFW news releases.

Information regarding the forthcoming 123rd VFW National Convention in Kansas City was distributed. The Convention is scheduled to be held July 16-21, 2022. Hotel reservation requests are now being accepted. Forms are available at vfw.org.

COUNCIL - Cont. on Page 12

MN VFW Legislative Report

By Jennifer Shumaker, Legislative Chairperson

The VFW annual Legislative Conference has provided an opportunity for VFW leaders from each state to personally lobby their respective lawmakers and watch as the VFW's current Commander-in-Chief testifies on Capitol Hill before the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees on behalf of veterans. National Council Meeting/Commander-in-Chief Testimony Washington, DC was held February 27-March 3. During this time, I was meeting with our local representatives, via Zoom meeting, to go over our VFW legislative priorities.

Benefits

The VFW urges Congress to:

- Pass H.R. 3967, Honoring our PACT Act of 2021, and S. 3003, COST of War Act of 2021. These bills would help millions of veterans by establishing a framework to address any toxic exposure, foreign or domestic, past, present, and future. This legislation would help Atomic veterans and Vietnam veterans, including those who served in Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, as well as in the Middle East, Afghanistan, K2, and beyond. They would add to VA's list of presumptive conditions and provide health care for all toxic-exposed veterans.
- Pass H.R. 3402 / S. 976, Caring for Survivors Act of 2021, to finally increase DIC payments to survivors, reaching parity with other federal agencies.
- Pass H.R. 5666 / S. 3025, Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act of 2021, which would require VA to modernize the MST definition to include technological abuse, codify the standard of proof for MST disability claims, review VA's MST training for claims processing, and examine barriers and challenges MST survivors experience with inpatient mental health care.



Retirement and Military Personnel

The VFW urges Congress to:

- Pass H.R. 1282 / S. 344, Major Richard Star Act, which would enable Chapter 61 veterans who sustained combat-related injuries to be entitled to DOD retirement pay and VA disability compensation without offset.
- Enact legislation that would create a new online feedback tool for military housing, similar to the GI Bill Comparison Tool, to serve as a central point of information for congressional oversight.
- Conduct periodic Committee on Armed Services hearings on transition to ensure DOD compliance with the law.
- Pass S. 1291, Record of Military Service for Members of the Armed Forces Act of 2021, which would enable accurate accounting of service periods and milestones for all Active and Reserve Component members via a single, standard record of military service.

Economic Opportunity

The VFW urges Congress to:

- Pass S. 1093 to establish a fourth administration in VA with an exclusive focus on economic opportunity benefits in order to provide adequate oversight and resources.

- Pass H.R. 1361 / S. 444, AUTO for Veterans Act, allowing eligible veterans to receive auto grants every ten years.
- Provide continued funding and rigorous oversight for employment training programs that show measurable outcomes such as the Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP), VR&E, and VET TEC, to include passing H.R. 2335, VET TEC Enhancement Act of 2021.
- Pass legislation that would provide equity in GI Bill benefits for Guard and Reserve members, in-person and online students, and student veterans with child care needs, to include S. 2644, GRAD VA Educational Assistance Parity Act of 2021.

Health Care

The VFW urges Congress to:

- Pass H.R. 3575 / S. 1944, Vet Center Improvement Act of 2021, which would evaluate productivity expectations for readjustment counselors and set guidelines for what type of workload each Vet Center counselor should maintain.
- Pass H.R. 4673, Ensuring Veterans' Smooth Transition Act, which would automatically enroll eligible veterans in VHA to provide a seamless transition of health care.
- Pass H.R. 239, Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act, which would provide women veterans access to the same no-cost contraceptive care as their non-veteran counterparts.
- Pass H.R. 5575, VA Nurse and Physician Assistant RAISE Act, which would increase pay for nurses and other medical positions, thereby making VA salaries competitive with those in the public sector.
- Instruct VA to include protective factors, such as VA benefits usage, in the annual suicide prevention report.

Honor Flight Northland Benefit 2022



Pictured above (l to r): Dist. 8 Cmdr. Joe White, Dist. 8 Adj. Mary Thompson, Post 1720 Cmdr. Mike Randall, Post 1720 QM John Vaudrin, Post 1720 Chaplain and Honor Flight alumnus Kenny Hurlbut, Honor Flight alumni Don Mayo and Phil Hansen, VFW State Cmdr. Barry Henriksen and his wife Kris Henriksen.

Members of Grand Rapids VFW Post 1720 gathered to raise funds for the 2022 Northland Honor Flight Benefit .

"Thank you" seems inadequate to express our appreciation to all who played a part, large or small, in making the it an overwhelming success. It seems that the months of planning and preparation was over in a blink of an eye.

Thank you to the 40+ volunteers and staff who sold raffle tickets, collected and/or dropped off donations, spread the word, helped with set-up, served food and beverages, helped with silent and live auctions, distributed prizes, cleared tables, cleaned up, etc.

We're grateful for the exceptional support from businesses and individuals for donations of food, silent and live auction items, prizes and monetary donations. There are simply far too many to name all of you specifically.

And, there are not adequate words to express our gratitude for the overwhelming support from the community, including several who traveled from across Minnesota to show your support.

State Convention - June 9-12, 2022

STATE CONV. - Cont. from Page 1

Quartermasters. Special awards will also be announced for the Auxiliary Hospital Volunteer of the Year.

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

SATURDAY

The VFW and AUX Conventions head into full swing, conducting the official business of their organizations. This will include nominations for 2022-23 State Officers and discussion of Bylaw proposals for the upcoming year as well as National Bylaws and Resolutions. Decisions made at these meetings will not only direct our organization locally, but guide our State Officers as they head to the National Convention in July. The Annual Silent Auction will be held in the Opportunities Suite Lobby from 8 am to 3 pm.

Saturday will end with the Convention Banquet, and a delicious menu (see the following article). As a reminder, the dress for the banquet is semi-formal. The highlight of the evening will be the announcement of the Captain of the All-State Commander's Team.

SUNDAY

The end to a busy Convention, we will conclude with the elections of VFW and AUX Officers that will lead us into the New Year. The Officers will be installed after the Convention Sessions. Please attend and support the 2022-23 State Commander and State President joint reception. The Joint Reception will be held from 1:00 - 2:30 pm at the Granite Post #428, 9 - 18th Avenue North, St. Cloud, MN.



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS - DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA



STATE CONVENTION

June 9-12, 2022

Best Western Kelly Inn, St. Cloud, MN

(Rev. 3-15-22) Tentative

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm OTI Early Registration
6:00 pm - 8:30 pm Dist. Officers Leadership Training

THURSDAY, JUNE 9

7:00 pm - 9:00 am OTI Registration
7:00 pm - 6:00 pm VFW Convention Registration/Credentials
7:45 pm - 8:45 am ATS Registration
8:00 pm - 4:00 pm VFW Officers Training Institute: Adjutants encourage to go

8:00 pm - 4:00 pm Quartermaster Class
8:00 pm - 4:00 pm Sign up Folds of Honor Quilt Raffle

9:00 pm - 5:00 pm Auxiliary Training Seminars
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm Lunch in Pool Area
VFW from 12:00-12:30
AUX 12:30-1:00 pm
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm Auxiliary Convention Registration/Credentials
2:00 pm - 6:00 pm Veterans Home Displays
3:30 pm - 4:30 pm MN VFW Charitable Association meeting
4:30 pm - 6:00 pm Finance Committee Meeting

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm VFW C of A Administration Session
6:30 pm - 9:00 pm AUX C of A Administration Session

FRIDAY, JUNE 10

7:00 pm - 4:00 pm Veterans Home Displays
8:00 pm - 4:00 pm Sign up Folds of Honor Quilt Raffle
8:00 pm - 5:00 pm VFW Registration/Credentials
9:00 pm - 3:00 pm AUX Registration/Credentials
9:00 pm - 11:30 am Joint Awards
11:30 am LUNCH
11:30 am PDC & PDP Luncheon

VFW COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm National Security/Foreign Affairs/POW Bylaws/Ritual/Rules
General Resolutions/Extension Member Finance/Internal Affairs
Legislative/Veterans Service/Employment
1:30 pm - 4:30 pm Opening Auxiliary Convention
2:30 pm - 4:30 pm Gambling Seminar
6:00 pm - 7:00 pm Joint Memorial Service

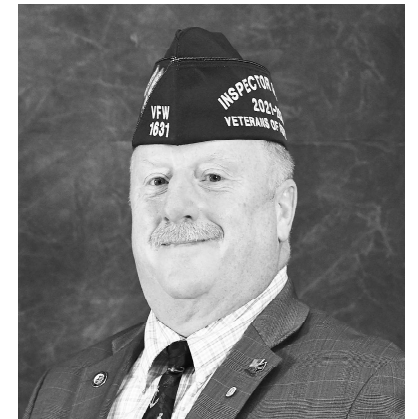
SATURDAY, JUNE 11

8:00 am - 1:30 pm VFW Registration/Credentials
8:00 am - 12:00 pm AUX Registration/Credentials
8:00 am - 3:00 pm Veterans Home Displays
8:00 am - 3:00 pm SILENT AUCTION
8:00 am - 4:00 pm Drawing Folds of Honor Quilt Raffle
9:00 am - 3:00 pm Open VFW Convention
9:00 am - 3:00 pm Aux Convention Session
12:00 pm Recess
1:15 pm - 3:15 pm VFW Caucuses
4:00 pm - 5:00 pm Church Service (Protestant)
4:30 pm Church of St. Anthony (Catholic)
6:00 pm - 6:45 pm Social
6:45 pm Convention Banquet

SUNDAY, JUNE 12

7:30 am - 8:30 am VFW Registration
9:00 am - 11:30 am Reconvene VFW Conv.
9:00 am - 11:30 am Aux Final Conv. Session
12:00 am - 12:45 pm Joint Installation Officers
12:45 am - 1:00 pm VFW C of A Brief Meeting
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm Joint Reception/Post #428

VFW Nat'l Inspector General Visits Convention



Paul Lloyd was appointed National Inspector General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. on Aug. 3, 2021, at the 122nd VFW National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri.

He served in the United States Navy from 1986 to 1998. Paul served on the USS Sampson during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. In recognition of his service, he received the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (four), Navy Unit Commendation, Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation (two), Navy Good Conduct Medal (three), National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi Arabia), and the Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait), among others.

Paul joined the VFW in 1991 at Post 239 in Charleston, South Carolina, later transferring to Post 1631 in Concord, New Hampshire, where he maintains his Gold Legacy Life membership. He has served in elected and appointed positions at the Post, District and Department levels, culminating with his election as the VFW Department of New Hampshire Commander from 2011 to 2012. On the national level, he has served on the National Bylaws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual Committee, and served two terms on the Council of Administration from 2013 to 2017, and from 2017 to 2021.

Paul and his wife, Teresa, reside in Concord, New Hampshire.

Charitable Association Silent Auction

Saturday, June 11
8:00am -- 3:00pm
Opportunities Suite Lobby

103rd Convention Banquet

Saturday, June 11, 2022

Reception 6:00pm Dinner 6:45pm

Entertainment before Banquet

Yankee Pot Roast, Mashed Potatoes, Gravey, Vegetable Medley, Salad, Bread, Coffee, Water, Alternating Carrot Cake with Caramel Sauce & White Chocolate Raspberry Cake

Please let the Host Post know if you need handicap arrangements or have special dietary needs

Fill out the form below and return to:

Granite VFW Post #428
c/o Quartermaster
9 18th Avenue North
St. Cloud, MN 56303-4545

Make checks payable to: **Granite VFW Post #428/Quartermaster**

Banquet Reservation for Saturday, June 11, 2022

DEADLINE: MAY 23, 2022

Please Reserve _____ Tickets at \$34 each.

Enclosed is a check for \$ _____ made out to **VFW Post #428/Quartermaster**

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Post/Auxiliary # _____ District # _____

Special Dietary needs: _____

HOUSING RESERVATIONS

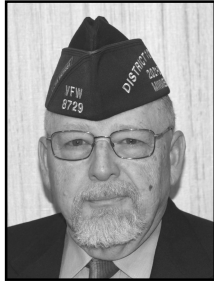
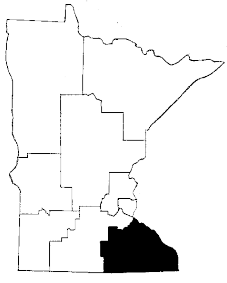
VFW State Convention 2022
Thursday, June 9 -- Sunday, June 12
Best Western Plus/Kelly Inn
100 Fourth Avenue South
St. Cloud, MN 56301

For Reservations call 320-253-0606
or Email at
stcloudfom@kellyinns.com

Room Block: **VFW 2022 State Convention**
Room Rate: \$92/night tax not included
(One bed or two beds)
Check in: 3pm Check out: 11am

DEADLINE MAY 6, 2022

News from YOUR District Commanders and Presidents!



**Thomas Brown, Commander
First District**

From the First District, I would like to extend my congratulations and appreciation to Mr. James Kelzenberg, VFW Post 1215 and to Mrs. Sarah Escamilla of VFW Post 3723 Auxiliary our counterpart in the Auxiliary side and the team they asked to judge the entries from the First District Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen. Thank you for a job well done.

Their efforts selected Ashley Homme from Rochester, MN, who was awarded as the state Voice of Democracy winner and represents Minnesota at the national competition. Ashley is sponsored by the Whitlock-Sonnenburg VFW Post 1215 and Auxiliary of Rochester, MN. This makes two years running to the Nationals, Congratulations. My thanks to all the First District Posts who sponsored entries to the VOD and Patriots Pen. We do have some very talented young people within our District.

I need to take a minute to address an issue coming in the near future. If you would care to move into a position at the district level, I would like to see our committees at least two members deep, with these members within the same post. Or closely related distance wise. In case (for whatever reason) we lost the lead person, we have an alternate to take over for a smooth transition.

At present many of our committee members chair more than one committee, in some cases several. The Gopher Oversea'r reaches each member of the First District. I'm asking the membership for more involvement. Nominate a member or volunteer yourself.

District elections will be held on April 30, 2022 at the Loyalty Days District meeting. At present we need nominations for the Sr. and Junior Vice positions and possible Judge Advocate which is an appointed position.

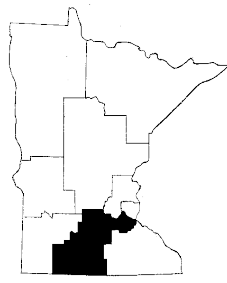


**Linda Henry, Auxiliary
President First District**

Hello from District One, happy spring!

We are coming to the close of another year. I have started to receive year end reports. I am looking forward to seeing what all our auxiliaries are doing for the veterans and their families, and the awards we will receive at the Department convention.

DIST. 1 AUX. - Cont. on Page 12



**Edward Keogh, Commander
Second District**

The 2nd District did an outstanding performance this year with School Programs. This is the second consecutive year that the 2nd District had a 9-12 Teacher of the Year win at the state level. Congratulations to Prior Lake Post 6208 and to winner, Keith Koehlmoos. The 2nd District also did well in the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Programs. Congratulations to Kaitlyn Kirchner and Jenn Lewison. Kaitlyn took 3rd placed at the state level in VOD and was sponsored by Madelia Post 3842. Jenn placed 3rd at the state level in PP and was sponsored by Prior Lake Post & Auxiliary 6208. Several posts in the 2nd District submitted many Patriot's Pen entries which made judging very difficult. I would like to thank the chairpersons for these programs who spent hours dedicated to judging and presenting awards.

The 2nd District Commanders/ Presidents Project "Sailing together to support our traveling Active Service Members" contributions to the Armed Forces Service Center are exceeding expectations. As of March 3rd, contributions totaled \$18,203.00. To make a contribution please make checks payable to Armed Forces Service Center, 4300 Glumack Drive LT-A-2021, Minneapolis/St Paul Int'l. Airport, St Paul MN 55111-3003. We would like to see all posts in the State of MN contribute to this great center.

This has been a very enjoyable and educational year for me. I have visited many posts within the Second District; their hospitality was outstanding. It was great to see posts improve on reporting and submitting required documents to the Department. Some posts have new leadership which resulted in turning their posts around to benefit their

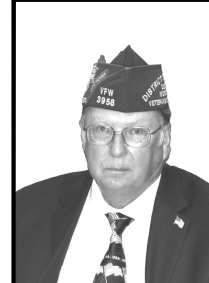
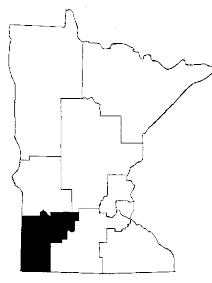
DIST. 2 CMDR. - Cont. on Page 12



**Jean Keogh, Auxiliary
President Second District**

Thanks to all Auxiliaries for their efforts and support of their posts promoting our scholarship programs. The 2nd District is very proud of our third place Department VOD winner Kaitlyn Kirchner, sponsored by Madelia Post/Auxiliary 3842; and our third place Department Patriot's Pen winner Jenna Lewiston, sponsored by Prior Lake Post/Auxiliary 6208. We had an unprecedented number

DIST. 2 AUX. - Cont. on Page 12



**Bill Brockberg, Commander
Third District**

Greetings Comrades and friends. In this most recent quarter I have had two flattering inquiries for information about our Third District Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy winners as well as our Teacher of the Year District and Department winner. These inquiries led to excellent news stories about us being published.

This brings up the point that all Posts need to participate as much as possible and as well as they can in our Veterans of Foreign Wars programs. When we do these things, we get noticed and in a good way.

At our last District Rally, the District Posts voted to give our Third District Auxiliary a charitable contribution check for \$1,000. Third District Auxiliary President Carolyn Penning said the Auxiliary will have great plans for that money. The local media published the presentation of that check with a write up and photo as well. All of these activities and events can help us in boosting membership if we just emphasize the good things we do.

We've had some consolidation of Posts occurring in the district. What one Post did was admirable. A gaining Post sent out an informative and welcome letter to all the members of the consolidating Post informing them of meeting dates, times, introducing them to Post Officers and briefly reviewing Post activities. Our next Rally is April 23rd in Minneota.

Keep calling members and veterans in general just to say, "hi." I know it feels awkward, but I promise you, buddy calls are appreciated and they do work to make friends and prevent suicide.

For God and Country.



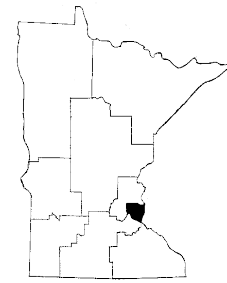
**Carol Penning, Auxiliary
President Third District**

Well nine months have come and gone and we are now a district of six auxiliaries. It is emotional for us all to see one of our sister auxiliaries close.

Fairfax Auxiliary encouraged us to gift Psalm 91 bandanas to the National Home for Children in Michigan. Each of our auxiliaries donated to this and they were given at Christmas time.

It has been difficult to do things at the Veterans Home and VA Hospital because of restrictions on visitors. We were just informed that we will again be able to help the residents

DIST. 3 AUX. - Cont. on Page 12



**Michael Lindvall, Commander
Fourth District**

As we move into spring and come out of our winter hibernation, it's time to think about going for a position in your Post, District or even State. The more people that step forward the better leadership we will have. Holding a position is gratifying and makes your experience as a VFW member even more rewarding. Many of our members have served in leadership positions while serving our country. Use your experience and training for the VFW. For those that wish to expand their leadership skills this is a perfect way to make that happen and build your resume. So please considered helping.

Over the last five years the Fourth District has enjoyed having Post Commanders earn a white hat and being named to the All-State Team. Three commanders were chosen as the Captain for the All-State Team. This happened because the post and the auxiliary worked together to perform all necessary tasks and creating the "big book". Please take notice of our auxiliaries and make sure your post integrates these fine women and men into your post. They have volunteered to help because they wish to honor a related service member who served our country. A very noble cause indeed.



**Jean Opatrny, Auxiliary
President Fourth District**

Greetings from the 4th District Auxiliary,

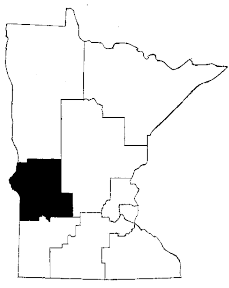
Congratulation to Eva Kolomyski, 4th District Patriot's Pen winner, on winning the department contest. Good luck on the National level.

Year end reports are in for the District. Good work was done by all auxiliaries. I want to thank everything for all the hard work. I would like to see the 4th District win many awards at the Department Convention in June.

The District Convention & Memorial Service was held April 23 at the Roseville Post 7555. Awards were given for the outstanding & hard work. Again thank you.

Nomination and election of auxiliary and district officers were held. Congratulations to all elected and appointed officers for the coming year. Feel free to contact district or department officers with any questions or help that an auxiliary needs.

DIST 4 AUX. - Cont. on Page 14



**Michael Gearmann, Commander
Fifth District**

Greetings from the 5th!

I am hoping this finds all of you happy and healthy. It's been a long winter and I'm sure everyone is ready for warmer days, I know I sure am! Here in the 5th we are still working on gaining new membership along with working on some officer training to finish this year strong and set us up for a successful next year. Our next meeting is scheduled for April 24th at 10a.m. in Osakis.

Our Senior Vice Cmdr. Lee Christopherson will be deploying to Iraq in April for a year with the Regional Support Group out of Brooklyn Park as a S4 NCIOC. We wish him a safe and successful mission. When we get an address we will post it so care packages and cards can be sent. We all know how important letters and packages from home can be.

I'm probably a little late on this but if you're curious about the progress at the new vet homes check out this link <https://mn.gov/mdva/homes/futurehomes/>. You will be able to watch construction with the on-sight cameras.



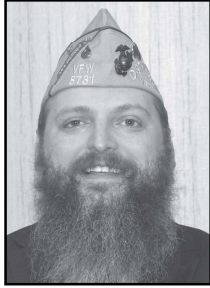
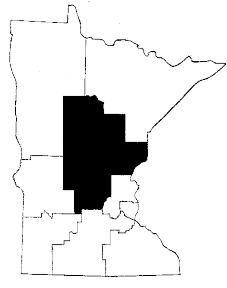
**Caitlin Amundson, Auxiliary
President Fifth District**

Hello to the Department of Minnesota!

The 5th District has been busy reflecting on its year and filling out year end reports on all the great things they have done for our veterans, current service members, their families, and our communities. April 24 will be our final district meeting in Starbuck, with Department Senior Vice Sonia as our Department Representative. It will be a busy meeting with elections and a memorial service. I look forward to again being with the members of District 5!

With the closing of this year will come the State Convention, and I am super excited for it! Learning about next year's programs, celebrating the successful year of the current president, welcoming next year's president to the new position, the list goes on. I am also looking forward to seeing everyone at the Convention!

I hope this finds everyone in good health and good spirits, and I look forward to seeing everyone in June.



**Jonathon Durst, Commander
Sixth District**

Greetings to all

District 6 continues to do the great work we've done year after year. We have 5 posts that have the 100%+ mark in membership. We are now approaching elections and conventions signaling the end of the year. However, we still have plenty of work left to do and lots of time to do it. Twenty posts need ten or less members to hit the mark this year. Let's finish strong and push ourselves to the finish line in June.

The district did a phenomenal job last year, and we can continue that momentum by reaching out to our comrades and reminding of all the great we have done and continue to do for Veterans. Poppy distribution and Memorial Day are perfect opportunities to show our communities that we are still here and still serving.



**Rita Reikofski, Auxiliary
President Sixth District**

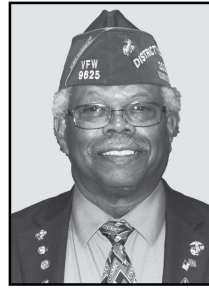
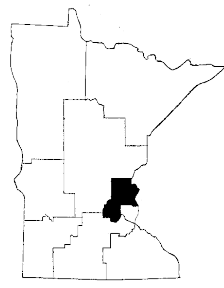
Greetings from the 6th District.

I would love to thank the 6th district for all the love that you gave in the form of socks for the sock project this year. I am very proud to say that we collected 1,519 pairs of socks this year. In 3 years now we have collected 3,289 pairs of socks great job 6th District. I am always taking donations of socks.

On April 9th we will be having a quilt working day. We are going to be meeting at the Granite Post 428 in St. Cloud between 10am and 3pm. We will be working on cutting quilt squares, putting squares together for quilt kits, and putting quilts together that we have sewed in the past. All are welcome to come and help. We will be having lunch served. All the quilts are going to be taken to the VA Hospital in St. Cloud. Hope to see many of you there to help.

Loyalty Days will be April 30th at Sauk Rapids Post 6992. Meeting will be held at 9am. The election of officers will take place at this meeting, lunch to follow, then installation in of officers will also take place on this date.

Just a reminder that year end reports are due to district presidents by March 31.



**Charles Hawkins, Commander
Seventh District**

Greetings from the Mighty 7th District

This being my last article for the Gopher Oversea'r, I would like to say how proud I have been to be the 7th District Commander. I have learned a great deal of knowledge about our district and the fellowships I have made. Our line officers have done an outstanding job for this past two years so I know that we are in good hands in the coming years!

We have had some terrific blood drives this year, and it's not over yet. Blood makes the grass grow lol.

Our membership teams in our posts are doing an outstanding job at retaining their membership, and getting new members. When you have visitors in your post and make them feel welcome, they will want to join. We have some post commanders that have really stepped and turned their post around.



**Char Guse, Auxiliary
President Seventh District**

Greetings from the 7th District.

Welcome to 2022! We are looking forward to a beautiful spring and renewed hope, health and energy to all of our members as we continue to with our mission to keep our veterans first and foremost in all we do.

As we look back on this year, we have taken steps to get out of our COVID restrictions and find our "normal" once again. Hopefully we have finally turned the corner. Our veterans need all of us doing our jobs and working the programs on their behalf.

As we look ahead, the June Convention is on the horizon. I hope that many of you can attend and take advantage to not only attend our meetings, but also reconnect with old friends, and maybe make some new ones as well. I miss seeing my friends and extended family. Who ever thought a hug could mean so much.

I would like to thank my 7th District Commander Charles Hawkins. It was nice to have a good friend as my commander this year.

I would like to thank my officers, chairmen and Auxiliaries for all their continued dedication this past year. I know that it has not been easy for anyone, but they did all that they could for our veterans. Thank you!

Our 7th District Convention is April 9th at Palmer Lake Post 3915. If you are in the area, please stop in and say hello. Hope to see everyone in June at the Department Convention in St. Cloud. I can't wait to hear the 7th District win lots of awards for their year's work. They've earned it!

DISTRICT CONVENTIONS

First District
Apr. 30 Lake City #8729 @ 9:30 AM

Second District
Apr. 30 Glencoe #5102 @ 8 AM

Third District
Apr. 23 Minneota #5334 @ 10 AM

Fourth District
Apr. 23 Roseville #7555 @ 9 AM

Fifth District
Apr. 24 Osakis #7902 @ 10 AM

Sixth District
Apr. 30 Sauk Rapids #6992 @ 9 AM

Seventh District
Apr. 9 Brooklyn Park #3915 @ 9 AM

Eighth District
Apr. 29-May 1 Ely #2717 @ 9 AM

Ninth District
Apr. 30 Bemidji #1260 @ 8 AM

MOC CONVENTION

May 14 Hopkins #425 @ 8 AM

Memorial Day is May 30

Does your Post have a
Memorial Day event
planned?



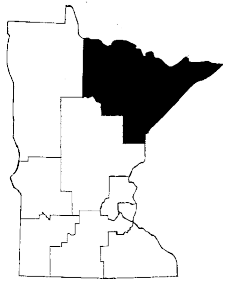
Every Post is urged to organize or participate in a Memorial Day Program in its community. Now is the time to start planning. Check with your local city, National Cemetery and VA Hospital or State Hospital.

Suggested programs and speeches are available through Department Headquarters.

Posts wishing to have a Department Officer as a Memorial Day Speaker should first confirm a date with the desired speaker and then advise Department Headquarters of their acceptance.

**Don't forget to change
your address when you
head back North for
the Summer.**





**Joseph White, Commander
Eighth District**

Comrades and Friends,

It has been an honor to take over command in the most recent quarter of this year. We started at the Midwinter Conference with our Patriot's Pen winner Brennan Muhich sponsored by Mesaba Range VFW #1172 and Auxiliary.

Our last district meeting was virtual. However, we are looking forward to gathering at Veterans on the Lake on April 29 - May 1 for some long overdue face time with each other. Now that COVID restrictions

DIST. 8 CMDR. - Cont. on Page 12



**Jean Harkins, Auxiliary
President Eighth District**

Greetings from District 8

My last district meeting was held on February 5th and it was a zoom meeting. We had Karen England, Department Auxiliary Chaplain and Membership Chairman, as our representative.

We had all of my district chairmen read their reports, with all their information to pass along to our members.

An election was held to fill the position of District Treasurer. Our long-time Treasurer, Lil LaVoy, retired. Dawn Flesland of Post 2948, International Falls Auxiliary will be our District Treasurer.

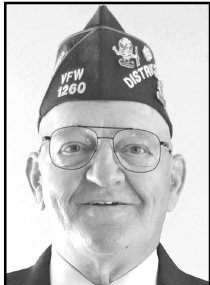
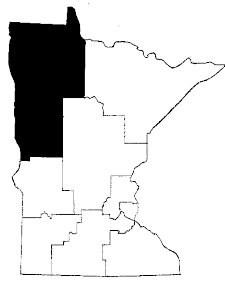
Our next meeting will be at Post 2717, Ely. It will be held April 29 May 1. We have many things going on the whole weekend. This is our Loyalty Days along with having a meet and greet event, on Friday evening.

Saturday will be our hospital meeting with our Silver Bay Veterans Home Representative, Randall. We will have our meetings and a past District Commanders and Presidents luncheon. We hold our Memorial Services honoring our deceased members. The best will be a fried walleye dinner.

Sunday our meetings will resume with our elections of officers and installation following, along with lunch afterwards.

We have many things planned, some raffle drawings and a silent auction. It's our busiest district meeting. Come on up to the north country! You can contact Commander, Tony Rechichi, Post 2717 Ely at (218)235-0999, for more information.

I want to wish all district commanders and presidents the best of luck. Happy spring!



**Kelly Booge, Commander
Ninth District**

Comrades, it seems like only a month ago that I was installed as the 9th District Commander. Where has the time gone?

I am still in awe of how much of the operation of the VFW I still need to learn. It has been a great learning experience with some very good leadership. I wish that I had more time, but that would not be fair to those individuals that stepped up to be the next in line.

I look forward to the Department Convention in June and hope that the 9th District can be well represented. With COVID still affecting so many people I realize it is a risk to be in a large group. While I encourage you all to attend you need to work within your comfort zone.

Our District is doing well in reporting with only a couple Posts having some difficulty. Membership is down from last year and I ask each and every one of you to take up the torch and get out there and recruit, recruit, recruit. We can still make a huge difference by the end of the year.

With the end of the year coming soon I would again like to thank the members of the 9th District for putting your trust in me to be your leader. I enjoyed the time and look forward to serving the "Mighty Ninth" in any capacity I can.



**Melissa Krosko, Auxiliary
President Ninth District**

Greetings from the Mighty 9th District

I hope everyone has made it though the winter safe and sound and looking forward to spring. Summer is just around the corner.

On March 12, Detroit Lakes Post 1676 hosted the District meeting. I am positive that we will have a good meeting. Also, on March 13 there was an Honor Flight Breakfast at the American Legion in Detroit Lakes. It was a very busy weekend for all. Our next meeting will be in Bemidji at the Eagles Club. This will also be our Loyalty Days. There will be a Joint Testimonial Dinner for District Commander Kelly Booge and myself.

The 9th District is at 96.97% membership. We are all working hard to retain and recruit members. We all know that it is a challenge to retain current members and recruit new members. Also, I would like to see the younger members attend more meetings and become more involved. They are the future of the VFW Auxiliary.

In April, National President, Jean

CLAIMS - Cont. from Page 5

forward to working with Senator Tester to pass truly comprehensive legislation through the Senate and send it to the President's desk. Toxic-exposed veterans do not have time to wait."

The Honoring our PACT Act will:

- Provide Priority Group 6 health care for over 3.5 million toxic-exposed veterans
- Provide extension of combat eligibility for health care from 5 to 10 years with a one-year open enrollment period for those veterans who missed their window.
- Streamline VA's review process for establishing toxic exposure presumptions
- Concede exposure to airborne hazards/burn pits based on locations & dates of service
- Require medical exams/opinions for certain veterans with toxic exposure disability claims
- Add hypertension and Monoclonal Gammopathy of Undetermined Significance to the list of presumptions for Agent Orange exposure
- Establish a presumption of service connection for 23 respiratory illnesses and cancers related to burn pits/airborne hazards exposure
- Create a presumption of exposure to radiation for veterans who participated in cleanup activities in Palomares, Spain, and Enewetak Atoll
- Allow for a new tort claim for veterans and families exposed to toxic water at Camp Lejeune
- Expand agent orange exposure to veterans who served in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia
- Improve data collection between VA and the Department of Defense
- Commission studies related to incidents of cancer among veterans, health trends of Post 9/11 veterans and feasibility of providing healthcare to dependents of veterans
- Require VA to provide standardized training to improve toxic exposure disability claims adjudications
- Require VA to conduct outreach and provide resources to toxic exposed veterans

Hamil will be visiting Minnesota. She will be in Moorehead/Dilworth area on the 22nd- 24th. It is an honor and privilege that she will be visiting the 9th District. It looks like it will be full schedule for the weekend. It will be a good time and hope to see as many people as possible from around Minnesota to be there greet Jean and give her a warm Minnesota welcome.

As we wrap our year, I hope everyone had a good year and enjoyed every moment. I am looking forward to the next Department meeting and seeing everyone that I have met. I have learned a lot being District President and I know that I can be a better mentor to the up-and-coming members. I have a lot of wonderful mentors that helped me along and now I can do the same.

COMMANDER - Cont. from Page 1

VFW for a great fundraiser. The post sponsored the event and raised a lot of money for Honor Flights. Hats off to Grand Rapids! This is the fifth time they have done one of these fundraisers. The number and quality of items available for silent auction, live auction, and raffle was very impressive. Great job of partnering with Honor Flights. Post Commander Mike Randall, and QM John Vaudrin did a great job, as did their Auxiliary. District Commander Joe White and Adjutant Mary Thompson were there to support the post for the entire three-hour event. Thank you all for your dedication.

Friday March 11 through Sunday March 13 was the VFW Bantam Hockey Tournament in Elk River. State Hockey Chairman Jim Hesselgrave ran a fabulous tournament. I also want to thank Commander Dave Boily, past State Commander Don Nix, Dennis Maddox and all the post members of Elk River-Rogets Post 5518 for doing all the jobs that it takes to run a tournament of this scale. Sixteen teams from throughout the state came to Elk River. The tournament started with a fabulous banquet on Friday night emceed by Melody Shryock. Former Wild player and Elk River grad Nate Prosser gave the keynote speech. Congratulations to Class A champion Warroad, and AA champ St. Louis Park.

On Saturday March 19 we were at the University of Minnesota ROTC's annual Joint Service Review. During their annual awards ceremony, I presented awards to three cadets. It was great to see my son Jake, a cadet in the program. I was also able to present checks to the U of M Army ROTC to support their upcoming Norwegian Ruck March. Thank you to The Charitable Association (\$2,000), White Bear Lake (\$500), and Chaska (\$250). Other posts including Cottage Grove sent checks directly to the U of M.

On a sad family note, my father passed away in March. He was an 86-year-old Navy veteran who loved his family. He was also very proud of his navy service and especially loved submarine movies. He was surrounded by his loved ones as he passed and will be laid to rest at Fort Snelling National Cemetery.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the convention in St. Cloud. We all look forward to the joint awards on Friday morning. The memorial service on Friday night is always moving and personal. On Saturday night we have some special guests that will appear at the banquet. Throughout the weekend we will have camaraderie, committee meetings, our business session, elections, and the installation.

I want to give special thanks to my wife Kris, my officers, district commanders, the office staffs, and Auxiliary President Jamie for all of the support this year. I look forward to continuing to serve at the post, district, and state level.

State Contest Winners



State Voice of Democracy Winner
Ashley Homme



State Patriot's Pen Winner
Eva Kolomyski



K-5th Grade Teacher of the Year
Jennifer Ufkins



6th-8th Grade Teacher of the Year
Mitch Vedders



9th-12th Grade Teacher of the Year
Keith Koehlmoos

AWARD SPONSORS

We would like to thank everyone that took on the request for sponsorships. These valuable scholarships and awards are being presented to recognize student's and teacher's outstanding achievements in these national scholarship and recognition competitions.

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

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

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

Sponsored by West Metro VFW 7051 - 7th District

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

Sponsored by Prior Lake VFW 6208 - 2nd District

K-5th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00
Provided by Everett McClay VFW Post #1296, Bloomington, MN
 Jennifer Ufkins, Canby Public School

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

6-8th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00
Tony Gozola Memorial Honor Award
Provided by Everett McClay VFW Post #1296, Bloomington, MN
 Mitch Vedders, Milaca Elementary School

Sponsored by Granite VFW #428 & Aux. - 6th District

9-12th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00
PCIC John Staum Memorial Honor Award
Provided by Everett McClay VFW Post #1296, Bloomington, MN
 Keith Koehlmoos, Prior Lake High School

Sponsored by Prior Lake VFW #6208 & Aux., Prior Lake - 2nd District

"Special Thank You" to Brooker-Edmund VFW Post #724, Saint Paul for contributing to the Saturday Winners Party and to the Minnesota VFW Charitable Association for their contributions toward the student Awards/prizes.

Voice of Democracy Winners

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

Sponsored by Ehitlock-Sonnenberg VFW #1215 & Aux, Rochester - 1st District

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

Sponsored by Vasatka-Goers WWII VFW #6690 & Aux., Mendota - 4th Dist.

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

Sponsored by Madelia VFW #3842, Madelia - 2nd District

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

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

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

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

Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)
Provided by Brooker-Edmund VFW Post #724, Saint Paul, MN
 Bronson Palmer

Sponsored by Coon Rapids VFW #9625 & Aux., Coon Rapids - 7th District

Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)
Provided by 3 Diamonds Corporation, Shoreview, MN
 Madison Schmitz

Sponsored by Elmer Goche VFW #3922, Wadena - 6th District

Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)
Provided by 3 Diamonds Corporation, Shoreview, MN
 Kortney Leppke

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

Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)
Provided by 3 Diamonds Corporation, Shoreview, MN
 Jordan Lee

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



FOLDS of HONOR

By Nathan Pike, Project Coordinator

Just a quick note and praise to the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thank you, thank you, thank you for the overwhelming support that is continuing to show with the Commander's and President's joint project the Folds of Honor. I am amazed and overwhelmed by the amount of money that was delivered during the parade of checks at Midwinter Banquet (\$31,776). Once again, the Minnesota VFW members both post and auxiliary step forward during times of challenge and bring the support required to accomplish whatever mission or task is asked of them. Again thank you!

Through your gracious efforts, just over \$75,000 has been raised so far!

Now if for some reason you (whoever you may be) are just learning of the Commander's and President's joint project here is what you need to know.

Okay folks from the top- Folds of Honor is the joint Commander and President project for their year. Folds of Honor is a non-profit organization "...this singular, noble mission. To provide educational scholarships to spouses and children of America's fallen and disabled

service members." Straight up from their website. Simply put, the educational scholarships support private education tuition and tutoring for children in grades K-12 as well as higher education tuition assistance for spouses and dependents. I cannot explain any simpler. Checkout the website: <https://minnesota.foldsofhonor.org>

But what can the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars, their districts, posts, and auxiliaries do for the project this year? Simply donate money to the program. Any amount will be greatly appreciated and will help provide the crucial funding for the educational and tuitional assistance Folds of Honor provides their applicants- the spouses and children of America's fallen and disabled service-members. What does the VFW do? No one does more for veterans. We take care of our own. I could fill a ream of paper on the amazing work that the VFW claims office does but that is for another article and another time.

If time permits it would be good to do another parade of checks during convention this June fill the coffers for the Folds of Honor project!

DIST 1 AUX. - Cont. from Page 8

Our Loyalty Days Convention will take place April 29-30. There will be a golf tournament and bowling tournament on Friday. Saturday morning will be a flag raising, followed by our district meetings, elections and joint installations. Saturday evening will be our joint testimonial banquet for Commander Tom Brown and myself. I am looking forward to the whole weekend. I want to thank Tom's wife Faye and my District secretary for all the work they have put into the planning of our Loyalty Days weekend.

I hope to see many of our First District members at Loyalty Days and then at the Department Convention in June.

It has been my honor to be your president these last three years. Thank you to all my officers and committee chairs for your hard work and support.



DIST 2 CMDR. - Cont. from Page 8

post, Veterans, and their community. On February 26, the Auxiliary President and I attended the 90th anniversary celebration at Walter Hecklin Post 1791 Chaska. It was an honor to attend this great milestone event.

Since I became Commander of the 2nd District, I have learned a lot about the workings of our District and Department which will benefit me in my future endeavors in the VFW.

DIST 8 CMDR. - Cont. from Page 10

are lifted, we look forward to getting back to normal district and post meetings. I would also like to say thankyou to Grand Rapids Post 1720 for hosting a huge fundraiser for Honor Flights on February 26. The house was packed, funds were raised and what a good time and food we all had. I also say thank you to our State Commander Berry Henriksen and his wife for attending we appreciate the support.

The district elections are right around the corner, and I am pleased to announce that many new comrades have volunteered to run to fill the elected positions and most of our nominated positions. I look forward to great things happening in the district in the next year.

Thank you to all my officers and commanders for your support this last quarter.

COUNCIL - Cont. from Page 6

Join the Inaugural VFW Day of Service

The VFW is proud to announce the inaugural VFW Day of Service — a dedicated day of service led by VFW members throughout the country and the world. The inaugural VFW Day of Service kicks off the first Saturday in May, May 7, and marks the start of veteran-led community service projects to take place throughout the month.

The VFW Day of Service is an outgrowth of the organization's #StillServing campaign launched in 2020 to recognize the ongoing dedication of veterans and service members who continue to serve their communities. VFW Day of Service, led by veterans and in concert with other organizations and civic groups, is open for anyone to participate. Members and Posts are urged to visit VFWDayofService.org to register their event on the interactive Day of Service map and receive a special participation decal, or find a local event to join and see what other veterans around the country are doing to make a difference.

Uniting To Combat Hunger

The Uniting to Combat Hunger (UTCH) Grant is now open! Through this grant program, Posts and Auxiliaries that donate funds and food to their local food banks, food pantries and community kitchens may apply for up to \$5,000 in grant funding. Posts and Auxiliaries may also qualify for grant funds based on hours accumulated by members volunteering at a soup kitchen, food bank or any nonprofit organization program focused on relieving food insecurity. The grant will remain open until July 31, 2022, or whenever the budget for the program has been exhausted. The application form, complete with full guidelines, is accessible at vfw.org/UTCH.

Lastly, we were asked by Bob Hendrickson, National Council Member from Kentucky to pass along their thanks to any Post or individual that sent a contribution or donated in any fashion to aid the victims of the devastating tornadoes back in December, 2021. They are so gratified by the overwhelming generosity of VFW people across the country and didn't want it to go unnoticed.

The Minnesota Veterans Color Guard presented the Colors at all six games on Sunday. VFW State Auxiliary Soloist Mary Touve-Kackman sang the National Anthem at both championship games. We want to Thank the Color Guard and Mary for a very Patriotic Day!

The biggest THANK YOU goes to Elk River – Rogers VFW 5518 Post Commander Dave Boily and the volunteers from his Post. Without their 'true' dedication and commitment to 'details' – this tournament would not have been a success. Instead, it was a GREAT SUCCESS!!!

See you all at next year's VFW Hockey Tournament in Moorhead.

DIST 2 AUX. - Cont. from Page 8

of entries this year which is a strong indicator of your dedication to our youth.

Commander Ed and I were honored to be invited to celebrate Chaska VFW Post 1791's 90th anniversary. Reaching this milestone speaks to the patriotic nature of those who first started Post 1791 and to those who have had a hand in its successful continuation ever since.

As the Commander and I started traveling again, we were privileged to visit the USS Arizona Memorial, the USS Battleship Missouri, and the Punchbowl National Cemetery. These sacred memorials and grounds pay a lasting tribute to those who gave all for our country.

The Commander and I continue to be overwhelmed by your extreme generosity supporting our joint project, the Armed Forces Service Center at the Airport. These donations are filling the gap as they work to return to pre-COVID status. We proudly report that as of March 3rd, \$18,203 has been raised for this place of rest and rejuvenation for our traveling military.

Congratulations to our auxiliaries that have reached or exceeded 100% membership: posts 1778 Wells, 1783 Young American, 1791 Chaska, 4743 Lakefield, 5338 Mapleton, 6202 Belle Plaine, and 9232 Winsted. Many others are very close. Please continue to recruit and retain our valuable members.

Our auxiliary year is nearing its end. Thank you for your support and contributions to the VFW Auxiliary, our Veterans, their families, and your communities this past year.

"Sailing Together to Support our Veterans"

DIST 3 AUX. - Cont. from Page 8

during Bingo on Thursdays and Saturdays. Many Veterans day cards were sent to both facilities as well as local nursing homes. Wilmont Auxiliary 2603 hosted a Veterans Day potluck and invited four Gold Star Families to be their guests. They were presented with a Gold Star Banner and a warm thank you from all who attended. Sixteen quilts were given to the VA Hospital in Sioux Falls by the Marshall Auxiliary.

We had district winners in VOD and Patriot's Pen contests from Canby, Fairfax, Westbrook, Wilmont and Minneota Post and Auxiliaries. The Americanism awards for the Thank You Veterans Day cards were all from Wilmont Post 2603. The Fulda, Adrian and Worthington School Districts each had a local Auxiliary and District winner.

Several Auxiliaries brought cookies, bars, rolls etc. to their 1st Responders meetings to thank them for their service to their communities. Many put blue lights on their porches to remind us of their service. Post 2603 will help their 1st Responders with their Breakfast fundraiser March 20.

We are not a large District but we do as much as we can by using media, word of mouth and parades etc. to promote Patriotism in our area. I am proud of all our Auxiliaries do in their home towns.

Veterans / Youth Activities

Bantam "A" and "AA" Game Commentary

By Jim Hesselgrave, VFW State Hockey Chairman

DAY ONE, Friday March 11

Friday started with eight games, four in the Kiser Arena and four in the Cornerstone Arena:

Game 1A (Kiser) – Monticello, sponsored by VFW Post 8731 played Andover, sponsored by VFW Post 9625. Monticello came to play hockey and Andover was concentrating on their High School Team in the State High School Tournament. The game ended with the win going to Monticello 6 – 2.

Game 1AA (Cornerstone) – St. Cloud, sponsored by VFW Post 428 faced Buffalo, sponsored by VFW Post 8731. These two teams had faced each other throughout the year and into the Regional Tournament. They knew each other well. Buffalo jumped out to a four goal lead, only to have St. Cloud come back and tie the game up. Buffalo scored the next three goals and St. Cloud was unable to equal the score. Buffalo went onto the Championship side winning side 7 – 5.

Game 2A (Kiser) – Warroad, sponsored by VFW Post 4930 met Cambridge-Isanti, sponsored by VFW Post 2735. Cambridge-Isanti put up a fight, but Warroad prevailed 5 – 2.

Game 2AA (Cornerstone) – St. Louis Park, sponsored by VFW Post 246 challenged Alexandria, sponsored by VFW Post 936. St. Louis Park reinforced their high state ranking with a 13 – 3 victory.

Game 3A (Kiser) – Forest Lake, sponsored by VFW Post 4210 had their hands full with Moorhead, sponsored by VFW Post 1223. Forest Lake showed that they can play with the 'northern' boys defeating Moorhead 4 – 3.

Game 3AA (Cornerstone) – Centennial, sponsored by VFW Post 7 faced a common foe, Elk River, sponsored by VFW Post 5518. Centennial walked away with the win 7 – 1.

Game 4A (Kiser) – Dodge County, sponsored by VFW Post 4555 took on Thief River Falls, sponsored by VFW Post 2793. Thief River Falls showed their 'top seed' skill with a first round win 4 – 0.

Game 4AA (Cornerstone) – Brainerd, sponsored by VFW Post 1647 matched up with Rochester, sponsored by VFW Post 1215. A good game, with Brainerd winning 6 – 4.

DAY TWO – March 12

Game 5A (Cornerstone) – Thief River Falls played Warroad. The long rivalry between these two clubs was played out in this game. The teams came to the VFW State Hockey Tournament knowing that they would face each other. Warroad had the muscle and they sent Thief River Falls to the Third Place Game with a 4 – 1 win.

Game 5AA (Kiser) – Brainerd faced a confident St. Louis Park Team. There was very little contest. St. Louis Park moved onto the Championship Game with a decisive 8 – 1 win.

Game 6A (Cornerstone) – Moorhead out skated Andover and moved into the Consolation Championship Game. Andover departed to watch their High School Team in the State Championship Game in St. Paul. Moorhead wins 8 – 3.

Game 6AA (Kiser) – St. Cloud faced off with Elk River. Elk River scored two early goals. Then St. Cloud woke up and scored four straight goals to go onto the Consolation Championship Game. Final score 4 – 2.

Game 7A (Cornerstone) – Forest Lake continued their quest for Gold in a very close game with Monticello. Forest Lake wins the game 4 – 3 and goes into the Championship Game with Warroad.

Game 7AA (Kiser) – Buffalo faced an improving Centennial team. This was a good game and Centennial sent Buffalo to the 3rd Place Game with a 5 – 3 win. Centennial will now face St. Louis Park for the Gold.

Game 8A (Cornerstone) – Dodge County looks to stay in the tournament by defeating Cambridge-Isanti. Good game! Dodge County tried to put Cambridge-Isanti on the board. In the end, Cambridge-Isanti took the decision and the game 6 – 3.

Game 8AA (Kiser) – Rochester faced a tough Alexandria team. The two teams exchange goals – anyone's game. Rochester had something to prove and Alexandria had something to say about that. Definitely a hard fought game where goaltending prevailed. Rochester advanced to the Consolation Championship Game with a 2 – 1 victory.

DAY THREE – March 13

'A' Consolation Game – Moorhead played Cambridge-Isanti. Both teams exchanged goals early in the 1st Period. It ended with Moorhead up by 2-0. The 2nd Period was scoreless, but filled with penalties. In the 3rd Period, Cambridge tied it up 2-2 and went into overtime! With five minutes left in overtime, Moorhead scored on a very stingy Cambridge-Isanti Goaltender. Moorhead took home the 'A' Bantam Consolation Trophy with an overtime win 4 – 3.

'AA' Consolation Game – It was St. Cloud against Rochester. This game produced two periods of great hockey. Excellent skating and goaltending both ends of the ice. After two periods, the game was scoreless! With less than a minute played in the 3rd Period, St. Cloud scored their first goal. Two minutes later, they scored the second and final goal. St. Cloud won the 'AA' Consolation Championship over Rochester 2 – 0.

VETERANS UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit www.vfwmn.org for Updates

Golf
July 30, 2022
Hosted by Cannon Falls #4452

Bowling
2023
Hosted by #295

Horseshoes
2022
Hosted by Monticello #8731

Pistol
2023
Hosted by Brooklyn Park #3915

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

YOUTH UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit www.vfwmn.org for Updates

VFW STATE BASEBALL

VFW STATE HOCKEY

**August 3-7, 2022
State Tournament**
Hosted by Austin #1216

2023 State Tournament
Hosted by Dilworth #1223

'A' Third Place Game – Monticello faced off against a tough Thief River Falls Team. It was a hard fought contest. Both teams played a clean game. Thief River Falls scored early in the 1st Period. In the 2nd Period, Monticello pulled ahead with two goals. Then Thief River Falls scored one and tied up the game. Late in the second period, Monticello slipped one by the Thief River Falls goalie to take the lead. The game was scoreless thru the 3rd Period. Monticello took the 'A' 3rd Place honors, 3-2.

'AA' Third Place Game – Buffalo faced-off with Brainerd and their short roster. After a flurry of goals, the 1st Period ended 3 – 2 in favor of Brainerd. In the 2nd Period, both team scored and it ended tied 4 – 4. The Third Period, really got exciting. Buffalo took the lead early and Brainerd tied it with five minutes left in the game. The first nine minutes of overtime remained scoreless. Then Brainerd found the back of the Buffalo net. Brainerd took the 'AA' 3rd Place trophy with a score of 6 – 5.

'A' Championship Game – Thief River Falls was expected to be the top team. Warroad had to face a determined Forest Lake Team for the 'A' Championship. Late in the 1st Period, Warroad scored a power play goal. Early in the 2nd Period, Forest Lake tied the game. Warroad came back scoring twice in a matter of minutes. Forest Lake answered with a goal. Score 3-2 at the end of 2 Periods. Starting off the 3rd Period, Forest Lake evened the score again. Five minutes left in the game, Warroad scored three quick goals in three minutes. One minute

left, Forest Lake scored on a power play. Warroad scored a short-handed goal with 48 seconds left. Warroad outlasted Thief River Falls with a 7-4 and is the VFW State Invitational 'A' Bantam Hockey Tournament Champion – 2022!

'AA' Championship Game – St. Louis Park sliced their way through this tournament with a couple of loped sided Victories. Centennial has also had an easy couple of games. Goaltending for both teams was exceptional. Halfway into the 1st Period, St. Louis Park finally put the puck by the Centennial Goalie, scoring the first goal. In the 2nd Period the game intensified and both teams spend some time in the Penalty Box. With about two minutes left in the period, St. Louis Park found the back of the Centennial net for the second goal of the game. In the 3rd Period, Centennial turned on their speed, and put two goals by a very good St. Louis Park goaltender. The first about halfway through the period and the second one at the end of the period. The game was in OVERTIME, tied 2-2! Overtime, started just like the first three periods. A fast game, well played and excellent net minders on both ends of the ice. With about seven minutes left in Overtime, Henri Ament (number 29) of St. Louis Park scored a 'garbage' goal to win in 'sudden death'! St. Louis Park prevailed with a 3 -2 victory over Centennial. St. Louis Park is the VFW STATE INVITATIONAL 'AA' Bantam Hockey Champion – 2022!

See you all at next year's VFW Hockey Tournament in Moorhead.

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Minnesota VFW Riders

By Jon "Gutterball" Durst



Winter might keep trying to make a comeback, but spring is right around the corner. Which means motorcycle season is fast approaching.

The VFW Riders have spent the offseason gearing up for summer. Keep an eye out for events this year including Monticello VFW Riders 8731's annual Blessing of the Bikes and SummerFest on the third Saturday of May and August, respectively.

The groups in Rochester and District 4 are also planning events this

summer. On the state level, we are still in the planning phases for future Passport Runs after the success of the 100th Anniversary event. All Posts who participated need to return their stamps to me so we can redistribute them for the next run. If your Post participated in the Passport Run, contact me at jondurst4vfwriders@gmail.com to confirm if your stamp has been returned or get information to return it or pay for the replacement. We all look forward to seeing you on the road for a long safe riding season.

Veterans Day on the Hill

The Veterans Day on the Hill (VDOH) is an annual event to draw our state legislators' attention to Veterans needs here in Minnesota.

This rally is a critical phase in the legislative process. It is a way to demonstrate our strength as Veterans, families, and supporters of Veterans. Our goal is to implement meaningful change, through the legislative process, to benefit our Veterans, their families, and survivors.

The legislative process can be frustrating, confusing, and hard to

follow. However, it is extremely important. Every benefit, state or federal, which our Veterans and survivors now have started as a piece of legislation that needed to navigate this process. A great example is the removal of the 8-year limit for property tax relief for surviving spouses, which was only accomplished after hundreds of hours of dedicated work spanning five legislative sessions.

The VDOH is sponsored by the MN Disabled American Veterans.

Cootie Corner

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

This will be my final article in the Gopher Overseas'r. I would like to thank the Editor Ken Schroepfer, for giving the Cooties the time and effort to ensure our word gets out, you have been "Lousy" and Thanks.

It has been a very Phun and Lousy two years. COVID has really kept us on our toes. Due to the work of the Grand of MN Cooties, we have fed over 1300 Venison Meals to Veterans in MN Veterans Homes and VAs for the past 2 years. We can also thank every VFW Member who buys the Venison Raffle Tickets. This year was the 66th year that the Cooties has done this great event.

For the second year, the Grand has delivered Valentines Candies to all residents of the MN Veterans Homes, St Cloud & Fargo VA's and the Eagles Healing Nest. COVID has made it tougher to get in these areas but not impossible. Pup Tent #62 lead the Charge, Lousy job Crotch Crickets.

Our Grand Convention is May 14th at the Hopkins VFW Post #425. This will be hosted by Pup Tent #15 Minnetonka. If you are a Cootie or

thinking of joining our Order, come on down for some Lousy Phun.

Our Grand Commanders / Grand President project this year is helping Silver Bay Veterans Home get a Rickshaw e-assist bike. The cost for one is \$10,000. This is so the veterans at Silver Bay can get out and enjoy the world's best bike / nature path, The Gitchi-Gami State Trail. Checks for this program can be sent to me at

James Dalziel
 12138 – 305th Ave
 Princeton, MN 55371.

Make the checks out to the Grand of MN. If you are going to use gambling money, make the checks out to the MN Veterans Home / Silver Bay. Put Rickshaw Project on the Memo line. Let's make it possible for our Vets to enjoy the great outdoors.

Finally, it has been a GREAT and Lousy Honor to serve everyone as the Grand Commander for the past two years. I have got to see all the hard work that is put in to serve our veterans in the Homes and VA's. All of MN should be proud. Commander Curt and Barry, it was an Honor to Serve with you both.

Once a Sailor, Always a Sailor

Gerald H. Wraa sr. is a life member of the Bemidji VFW Post 1260 and turned 100 years young on March 11, 2022. He joined the Navy after hearing that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and served during WWII from 1942-1946.

Gerald served the destroyer U.S.S. Charles Ausburne as a 40mm gunner. The ship was first sent into the North Atlantic and then on convoy duty to North Africa. She then was reassigned to the South Pacific and the Solomon Islands. In total, the ship traveled 200,000 miles. Her service record shows that the Ausburne went to battle station 780 times and was awarded eleven (11) battle stars in eleven (11) different campaigns. It was in the Battle of St. George (Solomon Islands) where the destroyers Ausburne, Claxton and Dyson engaged and sank 4 Japanese destroyers with all hands lost. There was no loss of life or ships in this battle.

The pre-rally starts at 10am along with coffee and lunch (11:00am) at the St. Paul Armory (600 Cedar St.). The rally leaves the North side of the Veterans Services Bldg. at 12:45pm and marches to the front steps of the Capitol.

For more information visit davmn.org/Events/ and click on "Veterans Day on the Hill." or email Trent Dilks at trent@davmn.org or call the DAV Office at 651-291-1212.



George Wraa and photo of the USS Ausburne DD570 with the list of combat engagements.

During his retirement years, Gerald and his wife attended numerous reunions with his former shipmates. A memorial bench with Gerald's naval highlights is located in the Clearbrook Veterans Memorial, in Clearbrook, MN. He and his wife are looking forward to celebrating their 75th wedding anniversary this year.

DIST 4 AUX. - Cont. from Page 8

I hope to see many 4th District members at the Department Convention in June at St. Cloud.

On a personal note, my sister and I would like to thank those that sent cards, prayers & remembrance of our Mom Edouarda "Edie" Opatry.

Timely Tidbits

WWII Vets Honored by Czech Republic



Pictured above (l to r): Richard Pieper and Fremont Gruss (front row center) are joined by family members and dignitaries - 2nd row MN Senator Dean Philips (center); back row State Cmdr. Barry Henriksen and Maj. Jan Pekár and Col. Jindrich Hacker (l to r) of the Czech Republic.

A very special ceremony was held at Everett McClay Post 1296 on February 22 to honor two WWII veterans.

Col. Jindrich Hacker and Maj. Jan Pekár of the Czech Republic's embassy in Washington, D.C. traveled to honor Fremont Gruss and Richard Pieper for their role in liberating Czechoslovakia from the Germans in May 1945.

Gruss and Pieper entered the

army separately but served together in the 97th Infantry Division. Both veterans are 98 years young. Gruss grew up in Annandale, MN and currently lives in Deephaven. Pieper was born in Keota, IA and now resides in Bloomington.

The 97th Division arrived in Europe just after the Battle of the Bulge. It then fought its way across Germany. Heavy fighting occurred at Siegburg near Cologne, at the Bridge

at Remagen. It was responsible for the liberation of the Flossenburg Concentration Camp. After crossing over to the Czech Republic, the division liberated Cheb, Marienbad, Carlsbad, and many other cities on their way to Pilsen.

The 97th Division was part of Gen. George Patton's 3rd Army, which met the Russian Army at the Demarkation Line just outside of Pilsen in the Czech Republic to mark the end of the war in Europe.

The 97th was then sent on to the Pacific where it was one of the units that occupied Japan after the peace treaty was signed.

Gruss, a member of Legion Post 259 in Excelsior, said that it is not particularly difficult to reflect on his own experiences because they happened so many years ago. Time does heal many wounds.

Pieper, a member of VFW Post 1296, along with other members of the 97th have been invited back to Pilsen for the annual Liberation Festival in early May. Even though the number of veterans attending has dwindled each year. It makes little difference to the citizens of Pilsen.

Pieper understands the Czech citizens' gratitude beyond any words. He simply adds, "they just won't forget what happened."

Gruss noted that when Memorial Day comes around each year he feels the full weight of the day through the memories of his lost friends.

Vets Reunion

A reunion is scheduled for any service member stationed at Cam Rahn Bay AB, Republic of Vietnam between 1965-1972. The event is planned for Sep. 29 thru Oct. 2, 2022 in the Kansas City area. Contact Diana Westphal at dicancook@gmail.com for info.

If you like to read stories about our veterans who have or will approach the century mark, please contact me.

If your Post has a Veteran from WWII or the Korean War (the Forgotten War), the Gopher Overseas'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

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

HOCKEY - Cont. from Page 1

two full sheets of ice for three days. What was a ten (10), then an eight (8) team tournament, then became a sixteen (16) team tournament. The 'new' VFW Invitational Hockey Tournament continued the new tradition by inviting both 'A' and 'AA' Teams.

To get the 'new invitational' tradition off the ground, Elk River - Rogers VFW Post 5518 offered to host the tournament at Elk River's new Furniture and Things Community Event Center on March 11 - 13, 2022.

On Friday night, 750 players, coaches and family members were treated to a pasta dinner in the Field House of the Furniture and Things Community Event Center catered by Serrano Brothers. Auxiliary Youth Activity Chairman Melody Shryock emceed and kept the program moving. Everyone had a FUN time. Dinner guests included State Commander Barry Henriksen, Elk River Mayor John Dietz and Elk River native and former NHL player, Nate Prosser. All were accompanied by their wives.

We would like to THANK the players, coaches and parents for making the VFW State Invitational Hockey Tournament a HUGE SUCCESS! Lastly, thank you to the VFW posts throughout the State that have made a 'solid' commitment to sponsor these bantam hockey teams.

Thank you to State Commander Barry Henriksen and State Chief of Staff Dave Adams for their time and dedication to the VFW Bantam Hockey Program and the VFW State Tournament.

Counties of Minnesota

WORD SEARCH #13

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

historicalexperiences.org

or contact the presenter at...

arnkind@historicalexperiences.org

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

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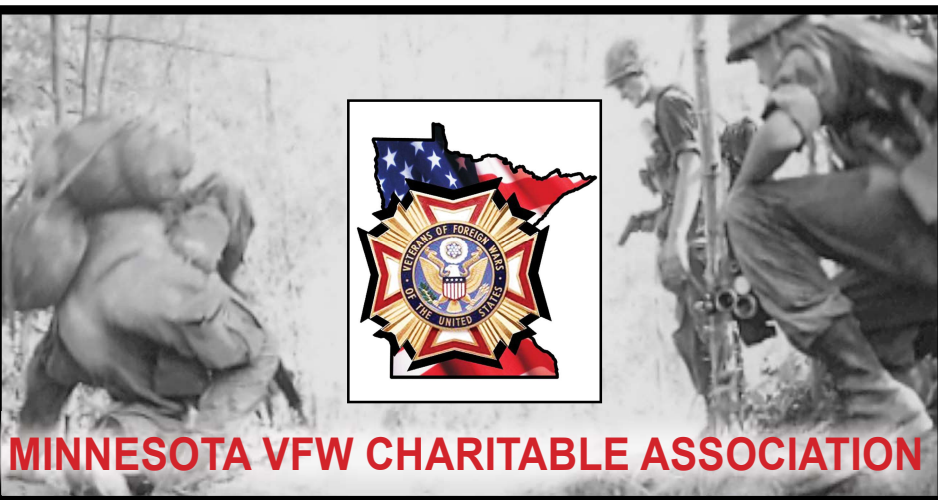
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With that said, the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars Charitable Association (MN VFW Charitable Association) is asking that you remember this Sacrifice through your Gift Giving and Donations.



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.

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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 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.

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