



Gopher Oversea'r



Volume 74, NO. 3

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

February 2021 - May 2021

Department Convention & 100th Celebration

Most will agree that the past twelve months have been verging on surreal. The hope is that 2021 brings us all better things... well, there is one thing we CAN be excited about- the 100th Anniversary of the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars! Although there has been little opportunity to celebrate thus far, our State Convention looks promising.

The 2021 State Convention will be held June 9-13 in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. Department Headquarters will be hosting the event at the Minneapolis Marriott Northwest - a comfortable, all suite hotel. This property boasts spacious common areas, over 62,000 square feet of meeting space and plenty of free parking. Enjoy a relaxing

weekend staying on site for the weekend or venture out to the Maple Grove shopping area with a vast array of restaurants and premium shopping. Either way, you don't want to miss this official kick-off of our 100th Anniversary celebration!

The weekend kicks off on Thursday with all day training opportunities for everyone - Officer's Training School (OTI) for VFW members and Auxiliary Training Seminars (ATS) are open to every VFW and Auxiliary member that wishes to attend (see the registration information on this page). These trainings are a great opportunity to find out about membership, programs and new plans for the 2021-22 year. Learn from some of the most knowledgeable officers in the State

and take this time to meet and consult with other members from across the state. The Minnesota Veterans Home will also have displays allowing Convention attendees to find out more about what they do at the Homes and how our members can help.

The official business of the Convention starts Thursday evening as State Commander Curt Hermanson and State President Paige Amundson open their respective Council of Administration meetings. Here is where the primary business of our organization begins. Just prior to these meetings, interested VFW members are encouraged to attend the MNVFW Charitable Association Meeting to hear more about their efforts to support Minnesota Convention - Cont. on Page 7



2020-21

State Commander

Curt Hermanson

Member of
VFW Post 4452
Cannon Falls, MN

Greetings Comrades,

Here we are again coming to an end of another year. Despite the trials and hardships if this past year (and a little more), I honestly think that we have all done very well to continue our efforts within the boundaries set to us. It almost feels as if a new dawn is within reach and in anticipation of that we are planning to hold a FULL State Convention this June. Planning is ongoing but I have hope that I will see you all once again, gathered safely together to; plan, celebrate and socialize within this wonderful organization.

I want to remind everyone that it is as important as ever that we continue to maintain and gather new members into our fold. I know times have been rough and that not being able to effectively socialize and network has caused us to hit some walls but I do not think that 100% is out of our reach. The tenacity of the members in our organization is one of our most admirable qualities so I encourage everyone to work hard to help us reach that goal.

As I exit my position as your State Commander I would like to express my sincere thanks to each and every

COMMANDER - Cont. on Page 10

A Colorful History - A National Leader 100 Years Department of Minnesota VFW

By Jim Hesselgrave, Past State Adjutant-Quartermaster

In 1973, joined Sgt. John Rice VFW Post 6316 in Blaine, Minnesota (There's a story with that as well). Then Post Commander, Harold Wolff signed me up and became my Mentor. Harold taught me a lot about the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I carry much of that teaching with me today.

In 1977, I applied for a job at the VFW Claims Office. Jerry Stokke got that job. At the same time, there was an opening for the Assistant Adjutant-Quartermaster. That job was offered to me and I accepted. I served in that position for twenty-one years and learned my job from two of the Greatest Adjutant-Quartermasters in the Country - John O'Neill Jr. and Lester Orton.

In 1998, I sought and was elected State Quartermaster. A

year later, State Commander Dave Adams appointed me State Adjutant and I 'officially' became the State Headquarters Office Manager.

During the almost forty years that I worked for the Department of Minnesota VFW, we were a National Leader in:

- Membership with forty (40) years of Continuous Growth reaching 85,988 in 1991 and an All-American State Commander every one of those years.
- Buddy Poppies with an All-Time high of 1,246,000 Buddy Poppies distributed in Minnesota. At that time, ALL of Minnesota's Buddy Poppies were assembled here in Minnesota by Disabled Veterans at St. Cloud V.A. Hospital, the Minneapolis Veterans Home and

Hastings Veterans Home.

- For decades, Minnesota led the Nation in Community Service.
- Other Departments were calling us about our Officer Training School, our various Procedure and Policy Documents and our All-State Post Commander and Quartermaster Point System.
- The National Organization always looked to Minnesota for New and Innovative ways to make the Veterans of Foreign Wars Great.

During those years, the Department had some of its Greatest Leaders. These State Commanders not only made a substantial impact in the direction of the Department,

HISTORY - Cont. on Page 14

Department of Minnesota, VFW
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Saint Paul, MN 55155

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

Save The Date!! Upcoming VFW Events

State Convention & Training Schools
June 9-13, 2021
Marriott Northwest
Brooklyn Park

National Convention
July 31-August 5, 2021
Baltimore, Maryland

Please watch for
Veterans' Activity
Dates in the monthly
Department General
Orders or on the State
VFW Web Page
www.vfwmn.org

VFW State Baseball Tournament
August 12-15, 2021
Austin

Fall Conference
September 24-26, 2021
Willmar

****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 5pm April 12, 2021. Bylaws and Resolutions submitted shall be specific and definite as to the Section, paragraph and line to be amended with exact wordings and deletions. Bylaws shall be adopted or rejected in the format in which they are submitted and cannot be amended at the Department Convention.

Proposed Bylaws and Resolution changes will be voted on at the State Convention in Brooklyn Park June 8-13, 2021

100th Year MN VFW Road Trip - Leg #1

By Barry Henriksen



The Department of Minnesota VFW officers are excited to announce the first leg of the 100-year Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars celebration tour. Exact times will come out in email blasts and the General Orders. Here is the "Concept of the Operation".

The celebration will start in the 5th District in Willmar on Thursday June 24. Outgoing State Commander Curt Hermanson and incoming State Commander Barry Henriksen, along with Sr. Vice Commander Dale Hoogeveen and Jr. Vice Commander Dan Meyer will bring greetings and thanks to the 5th District at the home post of past Department Commander Tom Hanson. Besides dinner and fellowship there will also be Commanders Pins and 100-year Commander's Coins. Please join us for a wonderful evening.

On Friday June 25th the road trip heads to the 3rd District in Redwood Falls. State Jr. Vice Commander Dan Meyer has worked tirelessly for the 3rd District and we have no doubt the District will come out in force for

this event.

Saturday June 26th brings the spotlight to the 2nd District. What better place for the spotlight than the home post of the incoming State Sr. Vice Commander Dale Hoogeveen. The two-time recent All American Post is excited to host the day. Look for lots of fun events.

Sunday June 27th is the Homecoming of outgoing State Commander Curt Hermanson in Cannon Falls. Please join us in celebrating his year as commander. His National Convention was cancelled. His Midwinter Conference was cancelled. His National Legislative Conference in DC was cancelled. But, he has never complained. Let's give him a day to remember and thank him for all he has done.

Please look for updates on a tour of the northern districts (July 6/8/9) and another weekend in the metro area (July 4/7). Hoyt Lakes and White Bear Lake are already looking forward to hosting events!

Statewide Passport Run

By Jon "Gutterball" Durst, Chairman MN VFW Riders

Many of you might not know that the VFW supports a motorcycle riding group program called the VFW Riders. Currently in Minnesota we have three Riders groups (Monticello, Cottage Grove, and District 4). Any Post or District can start a Riders Group, and any VFW or Auxiliary member can join any group without being a member of or transferring to the sponsoring Post. I am passionate about the VFW Riders program and encourage anyone with questions to contact me directly. To promote the VFW Riders program, and in celebration of the Department of Minnesota's 100th Anniversary. The Department of MN VFW Riders are sponsoring a Statewide Passport Run held from May 1 until September 1, 2021.

Posts throughout the state have signed up to be stops on the ride. Each participant registers online and downloads their own passport card and reference sheet. Participants then make their way to the Posts listed on the sheet, visiting the different Posts and communities they serve, and get their passport stamped. Every five

stamps qualify for one entry into the prize drawing to be held at the MN VFW Fall Conference in September 2021. Participants who visit ALL the Posts listed receive and extra entry into the drawing. Registration will open April 1, and the event will begin May 1. Completed cards will be sent to me for verification and drawing entry. The goal is to get out and visit Posts and communities that are outside of your area and gain an appreciation for all the work the VFW has done for communities around the state in the last 100 years.

While one of the objectives of this event is to promote the VFW Riders program and riding motorcycles while participating is strongly encouraged, everyone can participate regardless of vehicle preference. So, get your bike, trike, car, truck, or amphibious personnel carrier running and out on the road to celebrate 100 years of the VFW in Minnesota.

To find out more and register for the Passport Run, go to www.vfwmn.org, click on **About** and then **VFW Riders**. See you on the road!

Minnesota VFW Office Locations

Department Headquarters:

Dewey Hermanson, Adjutant
Jerry Brletich, Quartermaster
B5 Veterans Service Building
20 West 12th Street
St. Paul, MN 55155
Phone: (651) 291-1757
Fax: (651) 291-2753
Email: vfwmnoffice@gmail.com
Webpage: www.vfwmn.org

Auxiliary Headquarters :

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

Department Claims Office:

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

Minneapolis VA

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

GOPHER OVERSEAS'R

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Publications Committee:

Curt Hermanson, Commander; Barry Henriksen, Sr. Vice Commander;
Dale Hoogeveen, Jr. Vice Commander; Dan Meyer, Judge Advocate.

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

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

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

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

Please Note the below address change: (Please Print)

Name: _____

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State and Zip: _____

Post Number: _____

Department Headquarters News

Senior Vice Commander

By Barry Henriksen, State Senior Vice Commander

I hope all of you are as excited as I am for the 2021 State Convention. The last year and a half have been extremely challenging as we have negotiated through the COVID pandemic. I truly believe that we will have an in person and successful State Convention, and I look forward to seeing all of you. To be able to do our in person joint awards ceremony, convention, banquet, and elections is certainly something to look forward to.

I encourage everyone to watch for the schedule of events for the Department of Mn VFW 100-year schedule. Please see the article in this edition with the schedule. We will have fun! Also watch for more details on a northern and metro run later in the summer. Lots of 100 -year coins and pins and other giveaways will be passed out along with comradeship.

I have so many people to thank as we near the State Convention. Our State Commander Curt Hermanson has been great to work for. He calls, texts, and emails information so that I am always informed. Curt didn't get a National Convention,

Midwinter Conference, or National Legislative Conference. But he never complained. And he has done a great job!

I also want to give special thanks to Melody Shryock our office manager. She has worked tirelessly and loyally for the Department of MN VFW. We wish her well in her future endeavors and thank her so much for her service.

I also want to thank Dale Hooegeveen, Dan Meyers, Jerry Brletich, and Dewey Hermanson, and all our District Commanders and Chairs for all their hard work. We have a great team!

If elected as State Commander I look forward to continuing to serve our great State! Our work is critical. We have the best Service Office, best Community Service, and the best programs in the VFW!

Finally, I want to ask each of you to ask for help when you feel down. Look after your comrades that don't seem to be well. It isn't easy. If we save one life, we have made an impact.

Judge Advocate

By Dan Meyer, State Judge Advocate

Comrades to put it bluntly we had a very interesting year so far, we are going through some growing pains with the lack of in person meetings. They tell us this is the new normal but we still have to follow the rules of the post, district, state and national bylaws. With that said we must update our bylaws to go into the new virtual reality. Is this the right way to go with everything virtual?

It is a great tool for moving forward with our mission, but we still need to meet in person so we can check up on members mental and physical needs. If we do not check in on our VFW family who is going to take care of us? We need to take care of each other! So in closing have a safe and healthy year and I hope to see you at convention!

State Surgeon

By Jim "Doc" Tuorila, State Surgeon

I have pushed writing this article aside for several weeks while I was contemplating what I can say that will give our members hope and comfort.

This past year will certainly go down in history as one of the most stressful, painful and restricted years in our life. I have encouraged members to make buddy calls, to reach out to their fellow vets and to support them as they struggle with social isolation, lost jobs, financial struggles, health struggles, anger issues and the inability to even visit their loved ones in nursing homes or hospitals. Not having funerals for closure of the loss of a loved one, martial law type rules and regulation and not having the ability to socialize or get together with friends and family. Slowly things are getting back towards this new normalcy but it may be years before everyone feels

safe again.

We can still help others and have social outings as long as we stay safe and are careful about not spreading this virus to those with compromised immune systems.

Our local VA offered me the Vaccine and I have now completed both shots with only mild discomfort. Many of our family and friends have refused to get the vaccine and that is their right, but it may restrict their ability to travel.

We have all lost loved ones this past year and suicides continue to haunt us. Suicide is an escape from intolerable pain or anguish and with help from professionals or another veteran the hurting individual might take a closer look at the underlying problem and delay or stop them from making that irrational decision.

I have had to work with the families and friends of fatal suicides

Junior Vice Commander

By Dale Hooegeveen, State Junior Vice Commander

As our year draws to a close, I want to thank all comrades, brothers and sisters of the Department of Minnesota and Auxiliary for your efforts in advocating and caring for all veterans and their families. Although our major events dating back to State Convention in June 2020 took on a different look and feel, your Department continued to execute our programs and conduct the business necessary to comply with the Bylaws governing the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We used technology to allow our members to participate in the events having limited in person attendance restrictions and continue to strive to improve that experience. Recently, the 6th District approved the purchase of an integrated computer system that will allow them to offer attendance at District events via Zoom. I encourage all districts to consider taking action to provide that opportunity for your members. Your Department leadership is optimistic we will be returning to in person events soon and encourage all who are able to join us when attendance restrictions have been lifted. We will also continue to offer those events via Zoom or other similar platforms for those unable to attend.

Unfortunately, this year continued to see multiple post consolidations and the surrender of post charters. My experience with post consolidations reflects members of the posts being consolidated often

do not continue to be active members in their new post. This organization simply cannot afford that to happen, and I encourage every post member to become active in their new post. We need you to continue to contribute and to be active in your local communities. The Veterans of Foreign Wars motto, "No One Does More For Veterans" cannot be upheld without your efforts and I thank you in advance all you will do to support your new posts.

I am scheduled to visit the National Home for Children in May and am greatly looking forward to meeting my fellow Jr. Vice Commanders for the first time. Others who have visited the home describe it as an incredible experience that truly represents the ideals and mission of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

June brings our State Convention to Brooklyn Park. OTI offers the training necessary for Commanders and Quartermasters to be successful during 2021-22. Please make every effort to attend and share your experience with others to enhance the training.

I thank you for your hospitality as I represented the Department of Minnesota at district meetings. I congratulate all newly elected officers as well as those continuing to serve. We face challenges in many areas but I am confident we will continue to execute our mission professionally with great success!

Adjutant's Corner

By Duane "Dewey" Hermanson

The All-American Dashboard is your one-stop shop for reporting the VFW Programs. The dashboard will be populated with up-to-date information on which reports VFW National has received, and is a much more efficient way to track your Post or District progress toward achieving All-American for the membership year. These are the normal All-American Requirements: Buddy Poppy Order, Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen and Veterans & Military Support Donation. These are Additional Entries: Community

Service, National Legislative Service and National Veterans Services.

The Status bar on the Dashboard will be reflected in Yellow as Pending for the level that has not approved your report. The Dashboard will not change to Green as Met until National Programs have approved the report. The Dashboard will remain Red as Unmet until a report is entered.

IMPORTANT!!! All Adjutants must have an account on the National Website. If you are unable to set-up an account, I recommend you contact the Help Desk at 833-839-8387.

and the pain they must endure for the rest of their life is often unbearable. We as VFW members need to reach out more often. Offer classes on suicide prevention like the Eagles Healing Nest and the VA has done and not be afraid of confronting someone if we believe they may be contemplating suicide. They may get angry or question your motives but it also may save their life.

Make sure the suicide/crisis hot line is available at your post and on

your phone: 1-800-273-8255. These are your brothers and sisters. Twenty deaths a day is still too many.

Finally, we must continue to make stronger efforts to quit smoking, reduce our alcohol intake, exercise if possible, lose weight and stay mentally healthy and fit.

We must fight for our deserved compensation from the VA, call or write our elected officials and assist others who need help.

Minnesota Auxiliary News

STATE PRESIDENT
VFW Auxiliary



**Paige
Amundson**

Member of
VFW Post 1656 Auxiliary
Wheaton, MN



Greetings!

Spring is right around the corner. After the long winter months, we are ready for some warm weather, sunshine, green grass. We have had a very challenging year, but I am so proud of how everyone dug deep and found ways to make their Auxiliaries flourish.

We are finishing up with our year end reports. What a great way to see all the fantastic things that members completed during the past year. Finding new ways to promote programs, continuing to make sure our Veterans have what they need, getting new members to join our great organization, are just a few things to report. We have awesome members that keep doing amazing work.

Now is not the time to give up. We need to keep thinking outside

the box and continue to push our Auxiliaries to continue to do the best that we can do. We will continue with this crazy year knowing our journey is not complete. We will continue to do amazing things. We will not give up. We are Minnesotans!

Department Convention will be held June 10-13, 2021 at Minneapolis Marriott Northwest in Brooklyn Park. I am so excited to be able to hold an event! We will have a packed schedule every day. We will take care of business, but we will also have some fun. Our Department Chairman will be recognizing all the hard work our Auxiliaries have done this year. We will recognize our 45-year members, Auxiliary and District Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers, meet our Creative

PRESIDENT - Cont. on Page 10

National District Council

By Gaile Brekke, Member Area E

Greetings!

Hopefully you are all well and safe as it has been a very rough year for all of us, Auxiliaries and Posts. Thank You to our Department Office for all the help given to our Districts to make sure that our meetings have able to be attended via Zoom.

Our Department President Paige has had it extremely tough with auxiliaries going under suspensions due to COVID and other issues. Also she has not been able to do any fund raising for her special project TAPS (TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS). Along with Department VFW Commander Curt they have promoted this program as good as possible. If you can please support their project by donating.

Our National Council of Administration Meeting Mid-Year was held in Clearwater, Florida in February.

This meeting was also via Zoom. They were only allowed 100 members on it. They said that they would be working this problem out.

A huge THANK YOU to our Auxiliary Department Chairmen that have continued to get all the information they could out so that we could all work our programs the

best we could. Department Hospital Chairman Sue has put many hours and miles on getting items out to our hospitalized veterans and Veterans Homes. They appreciated all the Valentine cards and the St. Patrick Day Hats that were made and distributed. Our District Presidents and Auxiliary Presidents also need to be thanked for keeping our members informed of all the information they could during this time.

The Minnesota National Guard 1-194th Armor Regiment will be deploying nearly 1,000 soldiers from Minnesota in support of Operation Spartan Shield. The Soldiers are to be based out of Kuwait and could deploy across the region if needed. Around half of the deploying Soldiers have at least one dependent family member and nearly 8% of those deploying are female. The youngest Soldier is 18 and the oldest is 54. When they return we just may be able to increase our membership which would help as our membership is declining.

Even though we have not been able to get together in person let us continue to stay focused, work our programs and to take in what is offered to better serve our Auxiliaries and our Veterans.

Membership Chair

By Karen E. England

Greetings!

As I write this and send this update to press, the Department of Minnesota VFW Auxiliary Membership continues to be right on-track to make our goal of 101% by June 30th. We were charged with the goal of being 98% by the end of March, and at the time of this submission, we are right on track to meet our goals and are close to being 98%+ by the end of March. Our National Auxiliary Membership Ambassador has asked us to be 101% in Membership by June 30th. This is a lofty goal, but I believe that we can do it – for Minnesota!

We have already sent out personal

letters to each of the Auxiliaries in Minnesota who have not reached 100%. Their Officers have been asked to personally respond to an Auxiliary Department Officer with their efforts and their concerns, so that we are able to assist them in reaching our membership National Goals of being 101% by June 30th. As the Auxiliary Membership & Recruiting Chair, I continue to be confident that we will meet these goals, and I expect that we will receive National recognition for all of our efforts!

We KNOW that Membership is the lifeblood of our organization

AUX. MEM. - Cont. on Page 12

VFW Auxiliary Delegate Allocations

Delegates for District Meetings/Convention

One (1) Delegate AND One (1) Alternate for each fifteen (15) members or fraction thereof in Good Standing as of December 31

Delegates for Department Meetings/Convention

One (1) Delegate AND One (1) Alternate for each thirty (30) members or fraction thereof in Good Standing as of December 31

Delegates for National Convention

One (1) Delegate AND One (1) Alternate for each fifty (50) members or fraction thereof in in Good Standing as of March 31



Palmer Lake VFW Post 3915 & Auxiliary & District 7 VFW Auxiliary



Proudly Endorses Candidate:

Francesca 'Frankie' Bill

For the term: **2021-2023**

National VFW Auxiliary

District Council Member, Area E

Claims and Service Office Report

Jon Gohn, Claims Director

NEW AGENT ORANGE PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS

March 11, 2021

Many of you may be aware that the National Defense Authorization Act of 2021 (NDAA)(H.R. 6395) added three new presumptive conditions for those veterans who served in areas exposed to herbicides. The specific conditions that have now been added to the list are bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and parkinsonian type disorders.

If a veteran potentially filed of any of these conditions in the past and were denied, there is a possibility to take a new look at those denied claims from before. If a veteran is now diagnosed with any of these conditions and has not filed a claim for service connection, then we urge you to take the necessary steps to start that process now by contacting our office.

With all of that said, and even though they are officially added to the list, the Department of Veterans Affairs is not actively working those claims just yet. There needs to be further guidance from the VA's Office of Field Operations. Currently if a claim is submitted for one of these conditions the VA will simply defer it, and then begin the work on it once they get the green light. We are hopeful that will be soon.

The unfortunate reality regarding these diseases is that many veterans have passed while waiting for Congress to finalize everything with them. Because of this there are now many surviving spouses that are without their loved ones. We encourage any surviving spouse or eligible family member to contact our office for guidance on how to pursue their own claims for benefits,

because of their veteran's passing from one of these conditions.

As the list of conditions continues to grow because of Agent Orange exposure, I would be reminded in reminding everyone of other conditions that are already presumed to be due to those herbicides.

- AL Amyloidosis/Chronic B-Cell Leukemia
- Chloracne (if it presents within one year of exposure to a degree of 10 percent disabling)
- Diabetes Mellitus Type 2
- Hodgkin's Disease
- Ischemic Heart Disease (including Coronary Artery Disease, stable and unstable angina, myocardial infarction, and sudden cardiac death)
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Parkinson's Disease
- Peripheral Neuropathy, Early Onset (if it presents within one year of exposure to a degree of 10 percent disabling)
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda (if it presents within one year of exposure to a degree of 10 percent disabling)
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers, including Lung Cancer
- Soft Tissue Sarcomas (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, and mesothelioma)

If you have or know of any veteran suffering from any of the above, please again reach out to our office and we will be more than happy to help. The preferred method is email as we are still working hybrid hours due to COVID.

VFW to Deliver 2021 Priority Goals to Congress Virtually

March 10, 2021

WASHINGTON – For the first time in history, leadership from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) will address Congress virtually for its annual veterans' advocacy hearing.

VFW National Commander Hal Roesch will testify March 18 at 10 a.m. (EDT) before a special joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs held by video teleconference.

"Now more than ever, Congress needs to hear the voice of our veteran community," Roesch said. "The pandemic has overwhelmed all of us and changed the way we do business. Regardless of the setting or format, the VFW will continue to press for the full support of Congress on our key priorities and look forward to the

discussion on how to best address the issues affecting veterans and their families."

The yearly testimony typically takes place in-person on Capitol Hill, hosting a large contingent of leaders from the VFW and its Auxiliary, as well as other veteran service organizations. However, Congress made the decision to move all of this year's hearings to an online, socially distant format out of pandemic safety concerns.

Roesch is prepared to discuss the VFW's top priorities for 2021. These key legislative priorities include:

- Toxic Exposures and Other Environmental Hazards
- Veteran Economic Issues
- Veteran Claims and Benefits
- Underserved Veteran Populations

VA Fights Back Against Predatory Claims-Assistance Practices

March 4, 2021

WASHINGTON — During National Consumer Protection Week, Feb. 28 - March 6, the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) is raising public awareness about a tool to protect Veterans and claimants from companies who may be targeting them or their potential benefits.

VA encourages Veterans and their families filing benefits claims to review the department's Accreditation Search Index.

The index provides state-by-state contact information, as well as a downloadable list of Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representatives, attorneys and claims agents who are ready to assist with preparing VA claims in an ethical and lawful manner.

"VA cautions Veterans and claimants of online offers to assist in the preparation of their benefit claims that sound too good to be true," said Acting Under Secretary for Benefits Thomas Murphy. "To help guard against fraud and scams, VA urges all Veterans and claimants to first consult VA's Accreditation

Search Index to protect themselves from predatory practices."

A business or individual who prepares, presents or prosecutes VA benefit claims without proper recognition by the department is doing so contrary to law. All accredited representatives have been formally vetted to ensure they have good character and reputation along with being capable of providing competent representation for presenting to VA. When assisting Veterans, they must adhere to VA's standards of professional conduct which expressly prohibit the charging of unlawful or unreasonable fees. Those found in violation risk having their VA accreditation suspended or cancelled.

For more information on VA accredited representatives and their role, visit Accreditation & Discipline - Office of General Counsel to find information on VA-recognized VSOs and VA-accredited VSO representatives, attorneys and claims agents, fees for services and guidance on how to appoint and how to remove or change representation.

Claims Office Operating Hours and Contact Information

Like many other agencies in the Federal Building the VFW Claims Office is still operating in a hybrid fashion. We do have physical employees in the building from 7am to 12pm Monday through Friday. We are also operating from home. If you must call the office please call in the morning. The best, and most

preferred method of contacting us currently is by email. We check this continuously throughout the day and will respond promptly. Everyone continue to stay safe and we are here to help.

Phone: (612)970-5669

Email: VFW.VBASPL@VA.GOV

Veterans Claim Service

Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Bldg.

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

Phone: (612)970-5669 FAX: (612)970-5404

We'll Help with YOUR Veteran Benefits

Message From Your National Council Member

By Tom Hanson,
National Council Member

VFW and The Home Depot

The Home Depot Community Impact Grant for 2021 is now open after suspension last year due to COVID-19. VFW Posts can receive up to \$5,000 toward maintenance and improvements to their Post building! We encourage all Posts to apply ASAP if you desire to remodel your building. Please note that this is a competitive grant program and not all applications will be funded. Moreover, the application this year has major revisions. To make the process easier, the VFW Foundation has produced an easy-to-understand how to apply guide that walks Post members through the online application process. For your copy or if you have any questions, contact Grants & External Relations Coordinator Jason Couch at JCouch@vfw.org or (816) 968-1174.

VFW National Convention Housing

The 122nd National Convention housing officially opened on March 19, 2021. Housing reservation information will be located on the convention website accessed through the main VFW website at vfw.org/convention. The convention website will also have general convention information including the registration form and links to other convention related information for Baltimore, MD, July 31-Aug. 5, 2021, including a tentative agenda.

Convention Registration

Section 222 of the National Bylaws and the Manual of Procedure states each Post will pay, in advance, a National Convention registration fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25) which shall entitle the Post to a packet of convention information and materials and one identified registered delegate for the VFW National Convention. Each additional delegate attending the National Convention will pay a ten dollar (\$10) delegate fee provided the Post has paid the mandated \$25 advance registration fee. All advance registrations should be mailed to the VFW National Headquarters, 406 W. 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111, ATTN: Convention Registration or you may register online by going to www.vfw.org.

Special Edition VFW Birthday Cards

This spring the VFW is mailing the 2021 Birthday Card Collection and other gifts in recognition of your commitment to the VFW and to

struggling veterans of all generations. Also enclosed is a special Thank You card for a veteran or service member. Please sign and return it right away. We will deliver your signed Thank You card to one of America's service members or hospitalized veterans in time for Independence Day, this July 4th. It means so much to them to know their fellow veterans remember and care. Approximately 2.7 million men and women have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thousands of them have come home with injuries that will require a lifetime of care. Some injuries you can plainly see. Other wounds are invisible, but often just as devastating. Since 2000, more than 413,800 service members have suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury – and the numbers are rising every day. More than half of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans treated by the VA have received care for mental health issues such as PostTraumatic Stress.

The VFW wants to be sure when these newest veterans – and veterans from all wars and conflicts – turn to us for assistance, we have the programs available for them. Please send a donation in honor of your fellow veterans who now face a long road to recovery from injuries sustained in battle. Your gift will mean that these programs stay available and strong.

2021 Voice of Democracy Grand-Prize Winner to be Announced

Watch your email for an announcement of the 2021 Voice of Democracy State winners to VFW Friends of Freedom. We hope you will take the opportunity to listen to the essay given by your state winner as well as the winners from other states. "The grand-prize winner will be announced live on the VFW's Facebook page during the virtual Parade of Winners event, April 1, at 7 p.m. CDT." If you are not currently a member of the VFW Friends of Freedom, you can sign up to receive these important alerts at www.vfw.org.

As our VFW Posts begin to reopen we need to be cognizant of who we are, why we are chartered, and not let up on our mission. As America's largest combat veterans organization, the health and well-being of our members, partners, associates and communities remains our top priority. The VFW has a job to do and has made a solemn promise to those veterans, service members, and their families for whom we work. Now more than ever we must find solutions in the face of adversity and strive to meet the needs of those who rely on the vital service we provide.

I wish to thank every member of the Department of Minnesota VFW and Auxiliary for all you do. The continued efforts of these dedicated individuals is what makes us the organization we have become. Stay resolute in your objectives and know the officers and staff of the Kansas City and Washington VFW offices appreciate what you unselfishly undertake every day.

VFW Presses Congress on Comprehensive Toxic Reform 'Long Past Due'

WASHINGTON (March 18, 2021)

During the first ever all-virtual testimony to Congress, Veterans of Foreign Wars National Commander Hal Roesch called for the 117th Congress to get beyond partisan politics and work together to appropriately address toxic exposure during a special joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs held by video teleconference today.

The VFW delivered its top priority of toxic exposure reform, demanding Congress to develop a comprehensive solution for veterans who were exposed to toxic chemicals during their time in service. Roesch cited examples of toxic exposure throughout history, countering the notion that the claim is a new phenomenon.

"In World War I troops were exposed to gas, in World War II radiation, in Vietnam Agent Orange, in the Gulf War oil fires, and in Iraq and Afghanistan they were exposed to burn pits and other environmental hazards," Roesch said. "Toxic exposure for our troops has been synonymous with service for more than a hundred years, but every time we're faced with it, we act as if it's never happened before."

The VFW recommended Congress establish an independent commission, free of Department of Defense and Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) oversight, as well as partner with the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine to identify toxic exposures and evaluate their association to certain diseases. They also stressed Congress obligate the VA to accept toxic exposure claims for the sake



veteran care.

"The VFW believes Congress should require VA to grant a presumption of service connection for the conditions deemed to be associated with toxic exposures and environmental hazards," said Roesch.

Roesch pointed to VFW testimony on the subject of Agent Orange in 1990. At the time, it was observed efforts to provide comprehensive benefits to veterans stalled due to the pursuit of 'scientific certainty.'

"To overcome this, Congress implemented a process for establishing a presumption of service connection based on a 'significant correlation' between exposure and the onset of disease," said Roesch. "Then, as now, we believe this represents a 'fair and compassionate solution' to a complex problem.

"We must create a framework that will take care of all past, present, and future generations of veterans; again, that is long overdue," said Roesch.

Video of today's testimony is available to watch and share at <https://youtube.com/WVbFSuqICvs>.



MNVFW Charitable Association

By Barry Henriksen, Association President

We were all devastated at the news of the tragic passing of State Chaplain Billy Murphy. The Charitable Association Board of Directors has approved accepting donations that will be held in a trust for Billy's son. Donations should be made to the Association in the name of the "TJ Murphy Trust".

At the State Convention the Charitable Association will conduct our Gun Raffle. Thank you to everyone that purchased and sold the tickets. Special thanks to Dennis "Mad Dog" Maddox for selling the most tickets. And he's not even on

the board!

Every year we have three openings on the board of directors. If you are interested in joining please contact any of the Department Officers or Adjutant. Elections will be held at the State Convention.

We will also conduct our silent auction. Lots of great items will be available. Please make bids.

Finally, the Charitable Association will announce the amount that we will donate to the Department for next year. To find out, be at the banquet on Saturday night.

Thank you and stay safe

State Convention - June 9-13, 2021

CONV. - Cont. from Page 1

Veterans. The Department Finance Committee will also conduct their last official meeting of the year.

Friday starts on a high note with the annual VFW & Auxiliary Joint Awards Program. Everyone is encouraged to attend as we honor safety, community service, publications and other program achievements throughout the State. The awards session also brings the announcements of the 20-21 All-State Commanders and Quartermasters; the highest honors bestowed at the State level of the VFW. Throughout the rest of the afternoon, the VFW will hold committee meetings (see the schedule on this page) while the Auxiliary opens their Convention. The last meeting of the day is continuing education opportunity with the Minnesota Gambling Control Board. Friday concludes with the annual Memorial Service. This was greatly missed when we were unable to meet last year. All who can, are encouraged to attend this special ceremony where we remember our comrades who have left us over the last year. Listening to the memorial speaker is always an emotional and thought provoking opportunity.

Saturday, the VFW opens their State Convention while the Auxiliary heads into day two. Perhaps some of the most important business of the year is conducted at these sessions including review of the organizational Bylaws. The VFW will hold caucus sessions in the afternoon to discuss candidates running for State Officer positions... attend and have your say in the future of YOUR organization.

DON'T MISS IT! Saturday evening will be our Convention Banquet and the opportunity to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the VFW Department of Minnesota! We are planning a special evening to include a wonderful, Marriott dinner, goodies, fun and even special entertainment. Plan to attend as we join together for the first time to recognize our century of service and enjoy an evening of friends and fun! Reminder: dress is semi-formal for this dining event and don't forget the Captain of the All-State Commander's Team will be announced as well.

Sunday brings elections of the 2021-22 State Officers and we thank Commander Hermanson and President Amundson for their guidance throughout this difficult year. Stay after the Convention for the Installation of Officers and reception welcoming incoming State Commander Barry Henriksen and State President Jamie Cassavant.

The 2021 State Convention is sure to be a weekend of celebration... not only of our 100th Anniversary, but a celebration of gathering with our fellow members as we move toward an outstanding VFW year for 2021-22!



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA
2021 State Convention

JUNE 9-13, 2021
Minneapolis Marriott Northwest
7025 Northland Dr. N., Brooklyn Park, MN
Draft as of 3/25/21

SPECIAL EVENTS:
100th Anniversary Dinner
(Semi-Formal)
Incl. Prizes & Entertainment
FRIDAY: Red Cross Blood

WEDNESDAY, June 9:

5:00 PM – 7:00 PM Early Registration for OTI

6:00 – 8:30 PM **DIST Officers Leadership Training**

THURSDAY, June 10:

7:00 AM – 9:00 AM OTI & ATS Registration

OFFICERS TRAINING SCHOOL:

8:00 AM – 4:00 PM **VFW Officers Training Institute**
(Including Adjutant Responsibilities)

Quartermaster Class AUX Training Seminars

9 AM – 7 PM Convention Registration

2:00 – 7:00 PM Veterans Home Displays

STATE CONVENTION BUSINESS:

3:30 – 4:30 PM MN V.F.W. Charitable Assoc. Mtg

4:30 – 6:00 PM Finance Committee Meeting

6:00 – 8:00 PM **V.F.W. Council of Administration**

6:00 – 9:00 PM **Auxiliary Council of Administration**

FRIDAY, JUNE 11:

6:00 AM - 7:00 AM Rise & Shine Workouts

7:00 AM – 4:00 PM Veterans Homes Displays

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM Registration

9:00 AM – 11:30 AM **V.F.W. & AUX Joint Awards & Safety Awards**

~11:00 AM- 5:00 PM **Red Cross Blood Drive~**

11:45 AM Past State CMDRS and PRES Luncheon

1:00 – 2:00 PM **V.F.W. COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

1. National Security/Foreign Affairs/POW
2. By-Laws/Ritual/Rules
3. General Resolutions/Extension-Membership
4. Finance/Internal Affairs
5. Legislative/Veterans' Service/Employment

~continued~

FRIDAY, JUNE 10 Continued:

1:30 – 4:30 PM **Opening Auxiliary Convention**

2:30 – 4:30 PM Gambling Meeting

6:00 – 7:00 PM **Memorial Service (Joint VFW/ AUX)**

SATURDAY, JUNE 12:

6:00 AM - 7:00 AM Rise & Shine Workouts

8:00 AM – 1:30 PM Registration

8:00 AM – 3:00 PM Veterans Homes Displays

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM **Open VFW Convention**

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM **AUX Convention Session**

12:00 Noon Recess

1:15 PM – 3:15 PM **VFW Caucuses**

4:00 – 5:00 PM Church Service(s)

6:00 – 7:00 PM Social

7:00 PM **100th Anniversary Dinner Event**
Fun... Prizes... Entertainment After Dinner!

SUNDAY, June 13:

7:30 AM – 9:30 AM VFW Registration

9:00 AM – 11:30 AM **Reconvene VFW Convention**

9:00 AM – 11:30 AM **AUX Convention Session**

12:00 – 12:45 PM **Joint Installation of Officers**

12:45 – 1:00 PM

VFW Council of Administration Brief 21-22 Mtg

1:00 – 2:00 PM **Joint Reception**

PCIC John W. Stroud to Attend State Convention



John W. Stroud was elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on July 23, 2014, at the VFW's 115th National Convention, held in St. Louis, Mo.

He joined the VFW in 1996 at Post 10047 in Las Vegas, Nev. He maintains his Gold Legacy Life Membership at Post 2313 in Hawthorne, Nev. Mr. Stroud has served the VFW in many leadership positions, including Nevada Department Commander in 2006-2007. He has also served on numerous National Committees, including Chairman of the National Veterans Service Committee. He is a Triple Crown All American Commander Award recipient.

He graduated with honors from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 1990 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Professional Aeronautics. He worked as the Mineral County Building Official and is now retired.

He is a member of the Elks, and is a Life member of the Disabled American Veterans, the Military Order of the Cootie and the VFW National Home for Children.

John and his wife Mary, have five children and 13 grandchildren; they reside in Hawthorne, Nev.

~SEMI-FORMAL ATTIRE~ 100th ANNIVERSARY DINNER

SATURDAY, June 12, 2021

Celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Department of MN... Entertainment, Prizes & More!

~Semi-Formal Attire Please~

TICKETS: \$34.00 per person

Social Hour 6:00 P.M. Dinner Event 7:00 P.M. Entertainment After

◆ Beef Pot Roast, Roasted Potatoes, Garden Salad, Glazed Carrots ◆
Alternating Chocolate Cake & New York Cheesecake/Raspberry Sauce

Please note if you need handicapable arrangements or have specific dietary needs.

ORDER EARLY FOR BEST SEATING!

Ticket orders will be stamped with date of receipt and filled in that order. THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP POST AND AUXILIARY DELEGATES TOGETHER IS TO ORDER THE TICKETS AT THE SAME TIME.

Tickets will NOT be mailed out.
You may pick up tickets at the Conference- Watch for times.

PLEASE ORDER EARLY!!!

Fill out form below and return to:

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

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: Dept. MN VFW

100th ANNIVERSARY DINNER EVENT REGISTRATION FORM

Saturday, June 12, 2021 – 7:00 P.M.

PLEASE RESERVE _____ TICKETS FOR THE DEPARTMENT CONVENTION DINNER EVENT.

Enclosed is \$ _____ made out to **Dept. MN VFW** to cover the cost of \$34.00 per person.

TICKETS ARE BEING RESERVED BY: _____

PHONE # _____ EMAIL _____

POST/AUXILIARY # _____ DISTRICT # _____

SPECIAL REQUESTS: _____

****Deadline to Order: May 28, 2021****

VFW CONVENTION BLOOD DRIVE
Friday, June 11
11:00am to 5:00pm
Room to be announced

HOUSING RESERVATIONS

Call the Hotel OR Log-in to Make your Reservations.

*****DEADLINE May 21st*****

Mpls. Marriott Northwest
7025 Northland Dr. N, Brooklyn Park

Rate: \$104.00
Per Night Plus Tax
One bed or Two beds

CALL Marriott NW to Reserve:
1-877-303-1681

'Veterans of Foreign Wars of MN State Convention' Room Block

OR Reserve On-line:

<https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservationlink.mi?id=1614635628450&key=GRP&app=resvlink>

Confirmation # _____

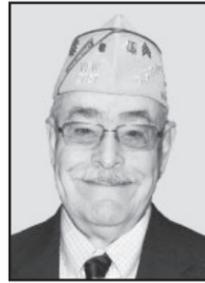
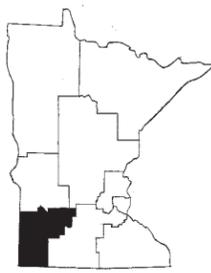
News from YOUR District Commanders and Presidents!



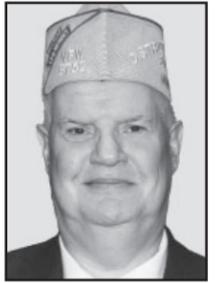
**David Thul, Commander
First District**



**Terrance Pieper, Commander
Second District**



**Buck Underwood, Commander
Third District**



**David Staehlin, Commander
Fourth District**

Comrades.

I would like to express my gratitude to the district for allowing me to serve as commander in a very challenging time for our organization and for our country. 2020-21 has tested our ability to adapt, and the district has come through this challenging year with better attendance at district meetings than we have seen in years. Special thanks to the large number of older Veterans who have embraced the Zoom meeting technology.

I would like to extend the following challenge to every district member. Many of us carry a VFW application with us wherever we go, so we don't miss an opportunity to recruit a new member no matter where we are.

We should also be carrying information on the Veteran's Crisis Line, so that we never miss an opportunity to save a Veteran from tragedy. 1-800-273-8255 or www.veteranscrisisline.net free assistance is available 24/7.



**Linda Henry, Auxiliary
President First District**

Hello from the First District.

Happy spring, I just hope Mother Nature knows it is spring!

The First District is doing well. End of the year reports are starting to come in. My hope is that all auxiliaries are "tooting their horns" about everything they are doing for Veterans and their families.

Our prayers are going out for Trudy Pierce in her recovery from a mild stroke. Also, I pray for all members for good health. Let's continue to stay safe and healthy.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at our Loyalty Days weekend. Our district meeting will be Saturday May 1st at 9:30 in Owatonna. Also hoping to see friends "in person" at our Department Convention in June.



**Johanna Rowe, Auxiliary
President Second District**

It has been an eventful year for District 2 with us losing Shakopee Auxiliary #4046 before Christmas. I would like to give a shout out to my Inspection Team who worked diligently in order to finish all the

inspections of the auxiliaries before February 28th. Unfortunately, during our inspections I was also informed that the St. James Auxiliary #1914 has decided to disband. I hope that these members decide to transfer

Greetings from the 2nd District,

As we enter into the home stretch of our term I must acknowledge that it has been a challenging year as District Commander. I hope things have gone as well as can be during these unpredictable times. I for one have missed the opportunity of gathering together to do business for the betterment of our Veterans and the community. As we move forward and businesses and events begin to open up, we still need to continue to maintain the safety of our members and our guests.

The Second District fell short on membership this year over all. There are three posts that reached 100% or more this year. Young America Post 1783, Le Sueur Post 4297, and Montgomery Post 5340. Congratulations on this achievement especially during Covid restrictions.

I'm pleased that the 2nd was 100% in Community Service reports. An extra thanks to Jim Murtaugh for all of his work. We had 3 Posts that had donations of over 200 units of blood - Wells Post 1778 with 219 units, Chaska Post 1791 with 225 units and Montgomery Post 5340 with 264 units.

We were also 100% in Post inspections by the date of our last District meeting. Special thanks to Larry Grindland.

I would like to recognize the "Teacher of the Year" entries: K-5 Deb Trecka Holy Redeemer Schools, Grades 6-8 Collin Scott Tri-City Schools, Grades 9-12 Heidi Veazie all sponsored by Montgomery Post 5340.

The Patriot's Pen entries: 1st Place Cullen Sletta New Ulm Post 1648, 2nd Place Allison Rynda Montgomery Post 5340, 3rd Place Mia Johnson Prior Lake Post 6208, 4th Place Tiegana Radaich Lakeville Post 210.

Voice of Democracy winners: 1st Place Taylor Radaich Lakeville Post 210, 2nd Place Laura Blesi Burnville post 5833, 3rd Place Brenna Solheid Belle Plaine Post 6202, 4th Place Asshley Zimmerman LeCenter Post 1803.

Congratulations to all the participants!

The next District meeting will be Hosted by Montgomery Post 5340 for Loyalty Days on April 24, 2021.

Greetings from District 3.

I am happy to say I enjoyed my last three years as your Commander. We have a very good person stepping up as our new Commander, Bill Brockberg. I know he will do a wonderful job.

Thank you also for getting our inspections done. We had some great inspectors. We have two more Post consolidating with Wilmont Post 2603. They are Luverne Post 2757 and Pipestone Post 3814. This will bring Wilmont's membership up to 238.

Hope you all have safe years ahead.



**Kathy Brockberg, Auxiliary
President Third District**

Greetings from the 3rd District

What a year we had! Though we were unable to visit our veterans home and nursing homes to serve coffee and play bingo, we still kept them in our thoughts. We delivered cover ups to the Luverne Home and Wilmont Auxiliary delivered a lot of handmade mask. We gave money to or local nursing home for bingo. We had grades 6-8 at Holy Redeemer write notes and sign Christmas cards for Luverne Veterans Home, and other veterans in the area nursing homes and assisted living. One Auxiliary sent out Veterans Day cards to their local veterans. Currently, our district is collecting money for my presidents project at the Luverne Veterans Home. We will divide the money between the birthday fund and the norelco shaver fund.

A big thank you goes out to our teachers in the area. They helped us get the word out to students about our different contests. Our district had two winners in the 5th grade essay and one winner in Voice of Democracy at the state level. We are currently finishing our Americanism, youth activity and creative patriotic art contests.

Thank you to my officers and program chairmen for helping me thorough this year. We had one zoom district meeting and are hoping to get together for our Loyalty Day meeting on April 10.

to another auxiliary in our district; instead of becoming a Member-At-Large.

Our District had a meeting on January 9th in Arlington with

DIST. 2 AUX. - Cont. on Page 12

Comrades of the 4th District, thank you for the opportunity to serve as District 4 Commander for a second year. It's been my honor to support a great groups of Posts and a privilege to work with so many dedicated members at the District level. Despite the closure of our Post homes, social distancing, and the suspension of our hospital visitation program, our Posts and your District have remained active. We've reached out to check on members, referred veterans to available resources, continued to work the VFW programs, and several Posts have found ways to hold Buddy Poppy distributions.

As we approach the end of the administrative year, your District, at the time I write this, is nearing 100% membership. I am confident that we will (or will have) reached 100% membership for the District with more Posts hitting 100%.

I encourage you to attend the Department Convention from June 9 - 13, 2021 in Brooklyn Park. Since it's local, commuting is an option. You can choose which convention events you want to attend. I hope to see you there.

Thank you again for all you do for veterans and for the VFW.



**Cynthia Fritsche, Auxiliary
President Fourth District**

Hello to all,

The end of my term is coming up. I have enjoyed being the President of the 4th District VFW Auxiliary the last two years. My Special Project for this year is: the Minnesota Military Family Foundation. It is a community-supported fund and distributes money through grants and loans to Minnesota military families that need a little help. We have a District Convention scheduled for April 17, 2021. We hope to see you there either in person or by participating on Zoom.

The 4th District had a Bake-less Bake Sale fund raiser. It went very well. Letters were sent out to all of the Auxiliary members of the 4th District and asked them to donate what money they would have spent, if they were to make a baked item.

I would like to thank all my Officers and Chairmen for doing such a great job the last two years.



**Michael Gearmann, Commander
Fifth District**



**Jonathon Durst, Commander
Sixth District**



**Charles Hawkins, Commander
Seventh District**

Greetings from the 5th!

Well, it's been a good winter so far. We've been working hard on membership and navigating the ever changing COVID landscape.

Our April 18th meeting in Madison will be a hybrid with Zoom capabilities for those not yet vaccinated or not comfortable with the in-person format.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the convention in June.

Hello to everyone.

It is hard to believe that we are already approaching the end of the VFW year. It would be an understatement to say that this year has been a challenge. However, the men and women of the 6th District have tackled that challenge head-on, and I am proud of all the hard work everyone has put into make this year a success.

Our work is never truly done. Keep up the hard work of serving your communities and fellow veterans.

Our District convention will be held Saturday May 1st in Jenkins, and I hope to see many of you there. My testimonial will be the following Saturday, May 8th, at the Monticello VFW Post 8731. Social hour starts at 5pm with dinner at 6pm. Contact Ron Widell for reservations (ron.widell@vfw8731.com). It has truly been an honor and a privilege to be your Commander this year.

something for everyone. Help our organization to grow.

I would like to recognize a few individuals:

- Sue Wiersgalla for all she has done this year. She made several hundred masks and distributed them to various places; she made 1300 Valentines - one for every Veteran in our hospitals and homes; and she was responsible for getting together the lighting of over 1,000 luminaries.
- Rita Reikofski for collecting "Fun Sox" for our Veterans
- Jackie Anderson for all her work in the sewing program.

A big Thank You to all my officers and chairmen; I really appreciate your help this year!!! I will not be having a Testimonial. In lieu of any gifts, I would like to request that you donate to my District President's Project-Recreation Fund at the Fergus Falls Veterans Home. Just send donation to our District Treasurer Rosie Athmann, 37181 Spring Haven Rd., Melrose, Mn. 56352. I would also like to thank my District Commander Jon Durst. He has communicated with me all year and kept me informed. It was a pleasure serving with you.

Our Loyalty Day meeting will be on Saturday, May 1st at Jenkins 3839. Meeting starts at 9AM. We will hold our annual Memorial Service and will be having Election of officers for 2021-2022. Lunch will be served at noon.

Greetings Comrades and Auxiliaries from the Mighty 7th.

We all have had a trying year, and so far there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel! Some of our major restrictions have been lightened up so far. The heavy restrictions on the number of occupants we can have in our buildings has been relaxed immensely. We still have some guidelines in place, but at this date, they should be a piece of cake.

Some posts have taken this time to do some remodeling of their post home. I have been to a few posts and seen the changes for the good. If you don't see the changes just ask someone and sit back and listen. Some posts have even taken the opportunity to have take-out food, which had been a great help to their community. Job well done.

Membership for the year has been one heck of a challenge, but we have taken on this endeavor, and moving forward. Membership is the most important thing in our organization. Without new and fresh blood we have to recycle our personal and that's where burnout begins. Some of our posts have consolidated (merged) with another post.

The committee chairmen have stepped up and handled their responsibilities with true military bearing and professionalism. Sometimes we forget our military bearing and where we all came from.



**Nancy Kaenel, Auxiliary
President Fifth District**

Greetings from the 5th District

It has been a very trying year with this COVID. I hope everyone is fine and taking precautions.

We held our first District meeting in Willmar by Zoom. Thanks to David Scofield for setting this up.

Our 2nd meeting was cancelled due to COVID taking Lester from us. After talking with Department President Paige and District Secretary/Treasurer Emily, we decided to be safe with all our members.

April 18, 2021 we will hold a District Convention in Madison at 2:00 PM and will also have Zoom. We will have Elections of Officers and any other business that needs to be done. COVID Rules will apply. I hope to see many of you again.

I would like to thank everyone for your cards, memorials, phone calls and all your kind words in the loss of Lester. He will be missed by many.

Anchors Away and let's do "OWL" we can for our veterans. God Bless Them All.



**Michelle Keller, Auxiliary
President Sixth District**

Greetings from the 6th District

This year has been extremely challenging due to COVID and the Pandemic!! I want to thank all of the Auxiliaries for their hard work and dedication during this time. You have had to adapt to the way things are done; by working together and communicating with one another we have accomplished a lot.

Continue to work on Membership!!! Please contact eligible members and ASK them to join. Let them know there is

DISTRICT MEETINGS

First District

May 6 Owatonna #3723 @ 9:30 AM

Second District

April 24 Montgomery #5340 @ 8 AM

Third District

April 10 Wilmont #2603 @ 10 AM

Fourth District

April 17 Roseville #7555 @ 9 AM

Fifth District

April 18 Madison #1656 @ 2 PM

Sixth District

May 1 Jenkins #3839 @ 9 AM

Seventh District

April 10 Brooklyn Park #3915 @ 9 AM

Eighth District

April 23-25 Baudette #723 @ 9 AM

Ninth District

May 1 Fergus Falls #612 @ 9 AM

MOC

May 14-15 Austin #1216 @ 10 AM



Don't forget to change your address back to Minnesota upon returning from the south.

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. We did have a number of things that COVID would not let us accomplish this year, but we managed to do what we could.

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

Our 7th District Convention is April 10th at #3915 Palmer Lake. If you are in the area, please stop in and say hello. Hope to see everyone in June at the Department Convention in Brooklyn Park. I can't wait to hear the 7th District win lots of awards for their year's work. They've earned it!

**VFW CONVENTION
BLOOD DRIVE
Friday, June 11
11:00am to 5:00pm
Room to be announced**

Don't Go It Alone!!!

JUST CALL!!!



THERE'S HELP!!!



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

Comrades,
The last few months have been interesting for all of us to say the least, but it looks like things are moving forward with more and more positive signs that the pandemic is winding down. What the new normal will look like is anybody's guess, only time will tell.

The month of February was special for three of our 8th District Members. Veterans, National Guard members, public officials and folks from their respective communities and beyond had the honor and privilege to join with them to celebrate their 100th Birthdays! Our Senior most Veteran was William "Bill" Loushine, a member of Post 1720 Grand Rapids. Bill turned 100 on February 23. Past Department Commander Joseph "Joe" Jeanette and a member of Post 137 Duluth turned 100 on February 23rd and Joseph "Joe" Berklich, a member of Post 1221 Hibbing turned 100 on February 24th.

I have had the pleasure to read some of the service history of these gentlemen and from what I read I can assure you they all served under incredibly dangerous and difficult circumstances with courage and valor. I have to say there are no finer examples of what truly is the Greatest Generation! A hand Salute to each of them is in order!

The District has finally scheduled an in-person meeting and will be holding our Loyalty Days Convention at Post 723, Baudette on April 23rd through the 25th.

We are certainly looking forward to seeing all our VFW friends we haven't seen in person for over a year! And in closing, I would like to recognize and congratulate ALL of our 8th District Post and Auxiliary members for the effort they've put forward over the last year, under difficult and sometimes frustrating circumstances to keep their Posts together and surviving. Well done, we made it through it together!



**Julie Stoehr, Auxiliary
President Eighth District**

Greetings from the 8th District VFWA

Despite all the setbacks with Covid and all of us learning a new way to have meetings this year, it went by surprisingly fast. I certainly missed seeing everyone and renewing friendships in our wonderful VFWA organization.

So immensely proud of all the Auxiliaries figuring out new ways



**Lynette Dornbusch, Commander
Ninth District**

Hello from the 9th District.

Happy Spring, Happy St Patricks' Day, a Blessed Easter, and Happy May Day/Loyalty Days. I think this is the first year since I've been a member of the VFW where we celebrate our Loyalty Days on May 1st. This is kind of cool, and I hope all the Posts out there have good turn outs. The Memorial Service remembers those who we have lost over the last two years. Our service will be in Fergus Falls on May 1st. Please have representatives at the meetings so we have maximum participation.

This past year has been hard on us all. This Covid -19 has really taken a toll. If you haven't applied for the Payroll Programs or County Grants, I highly encourage it. I know it is really helping most of our posts that have already grant money. Several Posts are consolidating currently. Audubon is consolidating with Detroit Lakes. They will use Detroit Lakes Post #1676 as the Post # and location.

June 5th Fergus Falls Post 612 will have a fund raiser for Operation Zero. This is also where I am putting my everts for Commander Project. We were told we are losing 24 Veterans a day to suicide. What ever the reason they have taken their lives, we have to help. The mission is to support, talk, share, and reach out to all those in need of an intervention and turn that number lost to suicide ZERO. It will be an all-day outdoors family orientated event, all are welcomed, Bike display and ride in. We are in process of collecting items for the silent auction. All donations and support is greatly appreciated. It will conclude with a band in the evening.

Good luck on your Post Elections. Thank you for your support as the 9th District Commander.

Aim High and see you at the State Convention in June if all goes well. Thank you.

to have fund raisers, increasing membership which is difficult and the programs. Through it all they remained strong and supported our Veterans.

Inspections were completed, it took a bit due to the COVID, but we got them done. Thanks to all for the help and to being open to changes with scheduling of the inspections!

Joyce Scott, Publication Director from the MN Veterans Home in Silver Bay, reports on the new items which the Home has purchased through our many generous donations and grants that are available. A new state of the art aquarium for one of the memory care units. The residents are really

COMMANDER- Cont. from Page 1

one of you. This year has not been what any of us expected but we have banded together and weathered this most recent life altering pandemic with respect and communal support for one another. Hearing about the strides that each of you have

made to continue to hold meetings, attend conventions and support your communities genuinely warms my heart and reinforces my belief that this truly is an amazing organization. None of this is possible without each and every one of you and I look forward to all of the strides we will make in the future.

PRESIDENT - Cont. from Page 2

Patriotic Art Contest Winners, honor some very deserving individuals, have election of Officers and so much more. Please mark your calendar and plan on attending Department Convention. I will be glad to see you! I have missed you!

This year has been a year that has had many Auxiliaries struggles come to light. There have been suspensions, meetings to hold votes to disband, consolidations and personal conflicts that have come up. I am fortunate to have some very wonderful people who were willing to step up and be the eyes and ears and see where the problems fell, and gave pointers

on fixing them. Some couldn't do it, but others met the challenge and continued on the journey. To anyone who served on a suspension committee, helped a failing auxiliary or possibly was my sounding board, THANK YOU! You are all so special to me and I appreciate all that you have done and continue to do!

Commander Curt, it has been an honor to share this year with you and your line officers. It has been one for the books, but we made it! I look forward to Convention, even though it signifies the end of our year. Thank you for all that you did for our Auxiliaries and members this past year! You helped make it one we "Owl" will remember!



**Tim Haugen, Auxiliary
President Ninth District**

Greetings from the Mighty 9th! Here it is, just about to the end of our COVID year.

Thank you, Paige, for doing such a fantastic job this year as our Department Auxiliary President. It has been a year of many new challenges, and I commend you for hitting them head-on and taking care of business.

Our District meeting will be held on May 1st (Loyalty Days) at the Fergus Falls Post #612. On the agenda will be our Memorial Service, the parade of flags, and of course,

our District elections. We will be honored to have our Department President Paige Amundson as our Department Representative. We have a lot to cover, and it will be a fun, productive meeting, I am sure.

In closing, thank you to everyone for your hard work and dedication to our Veterans, not only this year but all the years past and years to come. I want to thank my line officers and chairmen for their work, and I sure could not have done my job without your help. I also would like to be the first to congratulate all the incoming officers for the upcoming year. I wish you well at all levels of our organization for what you do for our Veterans.

Doing "OWL" we can for our Veterans

enjoying the aquarium, it is peaceful to watch fish swim back and forth. They also have an updated aviary with new birds, and a new feeding and watering system.

Joyce reports that the Home has started to do group activities on each household and in the Great Room, one household at a time as restrictions allow. The Veterans' favorite games are Bingo and Keno and they have increased the winnings which all really enjoy. They are allowing for a few social visits for the Veterans and are following strict COVID protocols. A few volunteers, that have completed their vaccinations, are being allowed in. At this time, there will not be any Veterans attending community events and the Home is not allowing any groups into the facility. Joyce states, the Veterans miss us all coming to visit as we all miss seeing them!

District 8 VFW and Auxiliary will be having Loyalty Days at Baudette VFW and Auxiliary Post 723, April 23-25, 2021. Friday night

will be a meet-and-greet at the club at 1800 including a meal. Saturday starts with the Hospital Board meeting starting at 0830, following with the business meeting at 0900. At 1700-1800, will be a social hour following with the Commander and President's Testimonial. And maybe some other festivities! Sunday the meeting resumes at 0900, with election, installation, and Memorial Service followed by lunch. Baudette is a beautiful area, and the VFW club has recently done some remodeling and enlarging of their community room. They also have a new Veterans Park there which is beautiful. It is a must see. Hope to see all for Loyalty Days.

State Convention will be held in Brooklyn Park, MN June 10-13, 2021 at the Minneapolis Marriott Northwest. Will be a great time! Looking forward to the awards from the programs given out.

Thank you all for what you have done for our Veterans and continue to do!

State Contest Winners



State Patriot's Pen Winner
Julianna Stacey



State Voice of Democracy Winner
Erin Stoekig



K-5th Grade Teacher of the Year
Stacy Johnson



6th-8th Grade teacher of the Year
Lori Dornburg



9th-12th Grade Teacher of the Year
Heidi Veazie

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
 Julianna Stacey

Sponsored by Long Prairie VFW #1140 & Aux., Long Prairie - 6th District

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

Sponsored by Sgt. John Rice VFW #6316 & Aux., Blaine - 7th District

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

Sponsored by Keep-Zimmer VFW #1782 & Aux., White Bear Lake - 4th District

K-5th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00
Nelson-Scofield VFW #4452 Honor Award
 Stacy Johnson, Crooked Lake Elementary

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

6-8th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00
Tony Gozola Memorial Honor Award
Provided by West Metro VFW Post 7051, Crystal, MN
 Lori Dornburg, Sartell Middle School

Sponsored by Rapids VFW #6992 & Aux., Sauk Rapids - 6th District

9-12th Grade Teacher of the Year..... \$300.00
PCIC John Staum Memorial Honor Award
Provided by Coon Rapids VFW Post 9625, Coon Rapids, MN
 Heidi Veazie, Tri-City United High School

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

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
 Erin Stoekig

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

2nd place..... \$1,000.00 V.O.D. Scholarship
Elk River-Rogers VFW Post #5518 Scholarship Award
 Chantal Emery

Sponsored by Strand-Saboe VFW #5247 & Aux., Dawson - 5th District

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

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

4th place..... \$400.00 V.O.D. Scholarship
Provided by St. Cloud East Side VFW Post #4847
 Taylor Radaich

Sponsored by Oscar & John Soberg VFW #210 & Aux., Lakeville - 2nd District

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

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

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

Sponsored by Keep-Zimmer VFW #1782 & Aux., White Bear Lake - 4th District

Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)
Provided by Olaf B. Damm VFW #1216, Austin, MN
 Emma Bast

Sponsored by Princeton VFW #806 & Aux., Princeton - 6th District

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

Sponsored by A.R. Patterson VFW #7, Minneapolis - 7th District

Runner-up... \$100.00 V.O.D. Scholarship (in no particular order)
Provided by Brooker-Edmund VFW #724, St. Paul, MN
 Talon Hilligas

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

TAPS

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

By Danial Jordan, Project Coordinator

Minnesota VFW Commander Curt Hermanson and Minnesota VFW Auxiliary President Paige Amundson selected the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, (TAPS) as their joint special project for the 2021-2021 calendar year.

The mission of TAPS is to provide comfort, care and resources to all those grieving the death of a military loved one.

In 2019, TAPS connected with nearly 7,000 newly bereaved loved ones, adding to a family of more than 90,000 individuals. Each year, TAPS holds more than 200 programs, answers more than 19,000 calls to their National Military Survivor Helpline and spends over 225,000 minutes in survivors outreach calls.

It is fast approaching the end of the year for this Commander's Project.

I am pleased to report that the

members of District 2 recently donated \$140.00 to the Project. That puts the total donated to date at \$21,050. The goal was set at \$50,000.

COVID-19 has had an impact on what our members and Posts have been able to donate this year.

Any and all donations are gratefully accepted for this very special cause. Your gift is tax exempt and will create a lasting impact for the families and love ones dealing with grief. To learn more about TAPS visit www.taps.org.

Please make your checks payable to MN VFW Charitable Association with a note on the memo line "Commander/President's Project 2020/2021".

There will be a Parade of Checks held at the Convention Banquet during the Convention for the Commanders' Project.

AUX. MEM. - Cont. from Page 4

– not only in the Auxiliary, but also in the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization. If we do not continue to retain, as well as gain new members, and keep members actively "working" our programs, we will not have the continued high level of influence on our elected officials which we need to have for our veterans and their families.

We have had various issues and concerns with legislation, both Nationally, at the State level, and also locally in Minnesota this year. As always, Membership continues to be extremely vital to our cause!

If your Post and Auxiliary are not now yet at 100% in Membership (on both sides), please consider "Adopting" those VFW and Auxiliary Members who are unable to financially afford the cost of their memberships and have not yet paid their memberships. Take this opportunity to ASK about VFW Post and Auxiliary Membership – and where your local Post and Auxiliary are (for numbers/percentages) at this time. We continue to lose members of the "Greatest Generation", as well as other loved ones. I just recently and unexpectedly lost my mother, Carolyn Krebs, who was a proud Auxiliary Member of my own Auxiliary. If your VFW and/or Auxiliary are not 100%+, then please do something about it!

I beg of you VFW Members and Auxiliary Members who are reading this to consider donating towards your own VFW and Auxiliary – to make sure that our "membership numbers" remain strong. Make a Donation to your own VFW or your supporting Auxiliary in Honor and Memory of the loved ones who you have lost this year! If you are personally able, and/or your

Post or Auxiliary are financially able to make a donation, please give generously! Please consider donating funds to the local Post, District, or Department Auxiliary (in \$10 increments) to provide "Angel Memberships" for those Auxiliary annual members who have not yet paid their Membership dues. What better organization is there to donate to, if we are financially able?

Please consider making your donations in Honor of Commander Curtis Hermanson or Auxiliary President Paige Amundson, or your loved ones, or deceased members. Rest assured, your efforts and donations will be recognized, unless you desire to remain anonymous! Please let me know what you prefer.

I have continued to say (many many times) that as an Auxiliary member to the VFW, we are always here to support YOU – our veterans of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We will continue to support you "ALWAYS, and in ALL WAYS!" That is my slogan. As the Auxiliary to the VFW, we are always working to promote your VFW programs, and are always working to support your efforts to bring attention to veteran's issues.

We desire to promote everything which will benefit veterans, current military, and their families. We support YOU – 100%! We all need to work to ensure that VFW Membership, as well as the Auxiliary Membership, continues to be strong – it needs to be 100%+!

If your VFW/Post chooses to make a donation this year to support the membership of your Auxiliary, or a neighboring one, please let me know so that the Auxiliary may recognize you at the June Convention. Thank you so much for supporting our efforts in Auxiliary Membership – 101, here we come!

Bees & Veterans



Bee Veterans 2021

The University of Minnesota Bee Squad's Bee Veterans program (z.umn.edu/bee-veteran) was founded in honor of beekeeper and Retired Lieutenant Colonel Michael Roche. His strong belief in the therapeutic benefits of beekeeping for returning Veterans inspires us to provide the materials and training necessary to make beekeeping an integral part of Veterans' lives.

Over the years, we have met and mentored many Veterans and their family members. Two of those individuals, Josh Munoz and Christian Dahm, became Bee Veterans mentors themselves after participating in the training. Josh currently works as a Bee Veterans mentor at our Minneapolis location, and Christian founded and runs the Propolis Hive Company, which supplies hive boxes that encourage honey bees to collect and store medicinally-potent propolis.

Retired Lieutenant Colonel Roche's interest and belief in the power of beekeeping is shared by Veterans across the country. This was confirmed for us at the American Beekeeping Federation's annual conference, where Bee Squad led a conversation with beekeeper Veterans in 2020. Participants from all over the country talked about the positive impacts beekeeping had on their lives, and about the importance of sharing the experience of beekeeping with others.

This summer, we have a wonderful team of mentors preparing Bee Veterans classes. Assuming we are required to stay online, we will

be doing "live" apiary classes from the Bee Vets apiary, via Zoom!

- Workshops will be held on Zoom at 6:30pm on the third Thursday of the month from May-September, live from our Bee Veterans Apiary located at the MSP airport in Minneapolis: May 20th, June 23rd, July 15th, August 19th, September 16th.
- If COVID restrictions are lifted, we may offer "in person" classes along with the virtual option (dates will remain the same). There is no deadline for application for these "live from the apiary" classes.
- To participate, send an email to beesquad@umn.edu to be added to our email list and receive updates about Minneapolis Bee Veterans workshops offerings.
- Dependents of participating Veterans are welcome to join, too (spouses or children over the age of 18).

The Bee Squad is joining forces with Michigan State University's Heroes to Hives program, along with University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and the University of Missouri. Through these partnerships, any Minnesota Veteran will be able to take advantage of Heroes to Hives' nine month free online training, in addition to participating in hands-on, Minnesota-specific workshops throughout the beekeeping season (May through September).

The 2021 Heroes to Hives program is full, but you can sign up to be on the list for the 2022 program at www.heroestohives.com.

DIST 2 AUX.- Cont. from Page 8

Department Chaplain, Dave Scofield as our Department Representative. The next upcoming meeting is planned for March 13th in Chaska with Sonia Tatge, Junior Vice President as our Department Representative. We are in process of planning Loyalty Days scheduled for April 24th in Montgomery with Jamie Cassavant, Senior Vice President as our Department Representative.

The Auxiliaries in District 2 have been working on all the programs such as Membership and Scholarship. The Lakeville Post and Auxiliary

#210 sponsored the District's Voice of Democracy Winner, Taylor Radaich, who placed 4th Place in Department. Membership has been chaneling with many not able to hold their membership dinners like normal; however, they have found other ways to work on this essential program.

With the year coming to a close, I wish the best of luck to the incoming officers for all the auxiliaries, the Districts themselves, Department and National. I have enjoyed my time being a District President.

Veterans / Youth Activities

VFW Post 5340 Honors Founding Member

The sole surviving charter member of the Montgomery VFW Post 5340 was humored and given his own day this past December, 2020.

Montgomery Mayor Tom Eisert presented A.J. Buck Zahratka with a proclamation declaring December 23, 2020, "A. J. Buck Zahratka Day" in the City of Montgomery. The proclamation honors Zahratka for being the sole surviving charter member of the Montgomery V.F.W. Post 5340 that was mustered 75 years ago on that date, for the impact his service to the community has had over the last 75 years.

Montgomery V.F.W. Post 5340 Commander Ed Keogh also presented Zahratka with a Certificate of Continual Membership, 75-year patch, and pin, recognizing his distinguished years of service to the local V.F.W. organization.

The presentations were made at Traditions of Montgomery with Zahratka's children, Linda and Dale Stadstad, and Zeke and Cindy

Zahratka attending.

The original Charter granted to Montgomery Post 5340 back on December 23, 1945, had 100 comrades listed as members.

The V.F.W. Post 5340 normally holds an awards ceremony at its annual holiday party held during the December meeting. This year, Covid-19 prevented this awards ceremony from taking place. Keogh delivered awards recognizing milestone years of service to the Post during the weeks of December 21 and 28 to the following VFW members:

Roger Ruhland, 65 years
Milo Kaisersatt, 65 years
Leonard Kaisersatt, 50 years
Greg Vlasak, 40 years
Dennis Bartyzal, 5 years

Eisert also presented Keogh with a proclamation honoring the celebration of the Post's 75th anniversary and proclaiming the week of December 20 to 26 as V.F.W. Post 5340 Week in the City of Montgomery.

Happy 100th Birthday PDC Joseph Jeanette

By Jim Hesselgrave, Past State Adjutant-Quartermaster



Joe Jeanette was a seriously wounded World War II Veteran. That was obvious to anyone that has met him. Joe always had a 'strong' will and

determination. Through it all, Joe always had a smile to share and a HEART to go along with it! His heart has always been with the VETERAN. Joe has always been a Strong Supporter of the VFW Claims Service Office!

During his year as State Commander, he faced a lot of Challenges (as have all VFW State Commanders). The biggest challenge for Joe that year (1983-84), was MEMBERSHIP! For some reason, the Department was struggling to pickup less than 100 members that year. Joe was coming into his State Convention looking like he wasn't going to make it. That's when his Junior State Officers and a FEW Great Post Quartermasters came to his rescue! The Department not only made their quota, but exceeded it! Thanks to Joe's Leadership and a FEW GOOD Officers and Quartermasters - the Department continued its Continuous Growth.



2021 - 2022 Voice of Democracy Theme

2021 - 2022 Patriot's Pen Theme



The VFW National Headquarters, has not yet released the theme for both of these scholarships. The theme announcement can be found at www.vfw.org and in the July-Sept., 2021 issue of the Gopher Oversea'r.



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**Veterans of Foreign Wars
Department of Minnesota**

VETERANS UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit www.vfwmn.org for Updates

Archery
2021 & 2022
Open for Bids

Bean Bag
2021 & 2022
Open for Bids

Bowling
April 10-11 and 17-18, 2021
Hosted by Sauk Rapids #6992
For REGISTRATION
Call Al Eiyneck (320-251-6193)
to get Entry Forms

Cribbage
2021 & 2022
Hosted by Austin #1216

Fishing
2021 & 2022
Hosted by Austin #1216

Golf
2021 & 2022
Hosted by Cannon Falls #4452

Horseshoes
2021 & 2022
Hosted by Monticello #8731

Pistol
April 18, 2021
Hosted by
Elk River-Rogers #5518
For REGISTRATION
Call Dennis Maddox (612-719-4381)
to get Entry Forms

2022
Open for Bids

Trap Shooting
2021 & 2022
Open for Bids

YOUTH UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Visit www.vfwmn.org for Updates

VFW STATE BASEBALL VFW STATE HOCKEY

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

2022 State Tournament
Hosted by Dilworth
#1223

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

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

★★ **WANTED** ★★

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

The Department of Minnesota VFW Office would like to compile a file and possibly a book of these memories and stories written in your own words. Pictures tell great stories. However, the event and those in the photo need to be identified.

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

Please submit no later than May 31, 2021
Photos will be returned upon request.

Cootie Corner

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

Fellow Comrades and "Lousy Cooties" to our Lousy Order did without notice, and to our Sky Pilot Theresa Shumway for the prayers that we have really needed this year. There are many Cooties buried deep in their work making the Grand of MN "The Best Grand" in the Supreme. Your work has not gone unnoticed. Thank You. There have been many Lousy Cooties who have still have done various and ingenious ways of serving our Veterans who need that helping hand. Our Membership is over 95%, which I believe is "Very Lousy" under the conditions of the pandemic. This has been our 100 year Anniversary. We were born after WWI and during the last great pandemic of the Spanish Flu. We came thru it before and Stronger than we went in. It has been an our St. Vice Len Honor serving the Vice Sue Register. Grand of MN. Your dedication MN Stay Lousy

This has been a trying year but also a year that we can be very impressed with our "Industrious" actions in the past year. We still delivered our Venison Dinners thanks to the Hard and Lousy work of the Grand Venison Chairperson Doug Doerfler and Grand Venison Chairperson Gary Anderson. It wouldn't of happened without the hard work of our Venison Ticket Chairperson Tim Arnold, we Hunter, making sure we are all proper. My Chief of Staff Bill Manor worked very very hard keeping CCDM and will be huge shoes to fill, Thanks from the Grand of MN. Also a big Thanks to our St. Vice Len Honor serving the Vice Sue Register. Grand of MN. Your dedication MN Stay Lousy

Purple Cross

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

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

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Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State: _____
Phone: _____ Birth Date: _____

HISTORY - Cont. from Page 1

but also made an impact on the National Organization. We have had two National Commanders-in-Chief: Robert E. Hansen (1961 – 1962) and John S. Staum (1985 – 1986).

Hansen gave new direction to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He adopted what is now the Voice of Democracy Program. He put the Veterans of Foreign Wars on the Map with our U.S. Legislators and was not afraid to STAND Up for what was RIGHT for our Nation's Veterans. Bob was also the VFW Leader that established the VFW Cancer Research Center at the University of Minnesota. For Decades, a standing Tribute to the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Staum stood firm on changes that had to be made at the National Veterans of Foreign Wars Headquarters. A sometimes quiet Leader – but TRUE in his Convictions. John also served on the Board of Directors for the National Korean War Memorial.

MEMORIES (Past State Commanders – I could probably tell you a story about every State Commander since Robert E. Hansen):

- Past State Commander Bob Larson (then State Membership Chairman) walking across the stage at the 1977 VFW State Convention in Duluth every ten minutes with an alarm clock until the Department reached 100% in Membership.
- Past State Commander Pat Bohmer and his scantily dressed

ladies handing out Campaign Buttons at his Hospitality Room when he ran for State Judge Advocate. There are many stories about Pat... some cannot be shared.

- State Commander Kelly Ferber and his Membership Team(s) driving through Minnesota winter storms to pick up Membership.
- State Commander Merlin (Mo) Hanson riding the Caboose from Willmar to St. Paul and meeting John O'Neill at the Depot to take care of Department business.
- State Commander Paul Reuter flying by Private airplane from International Falls to the St. Paul Airport to meet John O'Neill to conduct Department business.
- Past State Commander Al Loehr and his Legislative knowledge. Loehr seemed to know every Legislator by their first name. He always had the ability to get Legislation passed that benefited our Veterans.
- Past State Commander Jimmy Connolly sitting in Senator Paul Wellstone's Washington Office and saying to Senator Wellstone, "We voted you in, we can take you out!" Jimmy always spoke his mind.
- Past State Commander Frank Volk collapsing and passing away on the Midwinter Council of Administration table, just after he defended the Veterans on the Lake Trust Fund (his Commander's Project). God Bless you Frank...

Obviously, there are many more stories about our Past State Commanders. Many of which can and should be shared with the Membership (some stories, should just stay in the box they are buried in). Maybe some of these stories will come out in later issues of the Gopher Oversea'r.

Before, I close off this article, I would like to visit something I opened with.... Mentoring! We have (or it would appear) lost our ability to Mentor the members of our Posts, Districts and even the Department. Pick out a New Veteran, tell him/her about the Veterans of Foreign Wars and don't just leave it at that. Make sure that you make them a part of everything that the Veterans of Foreign Wars has been and is doing. Be there to Mentor them. I have been Mentored by the BEST and I have Mentored many through the years. My latest venture is still 'rough' around the edges – but, he is destined to be a Great Leader.

This year, of all years, we should look at the Past of this Great Department. Learn its History – fore it is a Colorful adventure that needs to be explored. We all forget about the 'foundation' that the Veterans of Foreign Wars was built on... Without understanding where we began and the Valuable Leadership lessons learned along the way – we are destined to 'failure'.

If time and space allows, maybe I will write more about some of the State Commanders Projects and other accomplishments of the Department.

VFW Post 1720 100-Year Old Veteran

Ponti-Peterson VFW Post 1720, Grand Rapids, happily celebrated the life of one of their own members, William "Bill" Loushine.



Bill joined the Marines in WWII when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Once He completed college, he was off to the South Pacific until the end of the war.

After the war, he helped form the National Guard unit in Chisholm from which he retired as the Battalion Commander with the rank of Lt. Colonel.

Bill still lives in his own home in Chisholm with a family member. He can usually be found visiting with his Veteran friends.

Remember those 'lonely' days during your Military Service...
Many of our Veterans are having those 'lonely days' in our
VA Medical Centers and Nursing Homes...
Once COVID restrictions are lifted, visit our fellow veterans
at a VA Medical Center or Nursing Home.

Timely Tidbits

Writing and Maintaining a VFW Post Website

By Mark Persons, Webmaster VFW Post 1647, Brainerd

An article about writing post websites, in the last *Gopher Oversea'r*, resulted in several questions and comments. To clarify, almost anyone can write a post website. It is not difficult. The goal is to present the organization in a positive light to members and the public. Websites are information resources. They can be a force for good or can give the post a black eye if the content is outdated.

An important point is the web address needs to be short. In the case of the one I write for the Brainerd VFW, it is *BrainerdVFW.org*. The address does not have a post number or even say post. It is short and to the point, so it is easy to relate in a

conversation and be remembered.

You will note also that the address ends in *.org* and not *.com*. National VFW and state/department VFW websites end in *.org* because VFWs are not-for-profit organizations and are taxed accordingly. Interestingly, the Brainerd VFW has a *.com* address as well. Find out why in a six-page how-to guide by going to: <https://www.brainerdvfw.org/web-writing.html>

Mark Persons was an Army sergeant in Vietnam and is now a member of the Brainerd VFW. At age 73, he serves as Post Chaplain and Webmaster.

Hagedorn Introduces Resolution to Honor MN VFW's 100th Anniversary

February 5, 2021 Press Release
 WASHINGTON – Congressman Jim Hagedorn (MN-01) yesterday introduced a resolution to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Reps. Angie Craig (MN-02), Dean Phillips (MN-03), Tom Emmer (MN-06), Michelle Fischbach (MN-07) and Pete Stauber (MN-08) signed onto the resolution as original cosponsors.

“The Minnesota VFW provides a wide array of services to its members, including youth development and scholarships, national security advocacy and legislative affairs, citizenship education, veterans fellowship retreats, and financial assistance for disabled veterans. I am

incredibly grateful to all those at the Minnesota VFW who work tirelessly on behalf of our state’s veterans. Here’s to 100 more years,” said Hagedorn.

“The Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars is humbled and honored to be recognized by the 117th Congress of the United States of America for our 100 years of unwavering dedication to assisting Veterans and their families. To receive this sort of nonpartisan recognition and support for our mission to Veterans and their families speaks volumes to the work that the members of the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars do daily,” wrote Minnesota VFW State Commander Curt Hermanson in a letter to Representative Hagedorn.

100-Year Old Vet Still Driving in Hibbing



During WWII, Joseph “Joe” Berklich served in the US Army’s 23rd Infantry Division, aka the “Americal Division” in the North Solomon and Philippine Islands. While in the service, he earned 2 Bronze Service Stars and 3 Overseas Stars.

Joe still lives by himself in his home in Hibbing. His Veteran buddies from Johnson-Messner-Roche VFW Post 1221 stop by to check up on him nearly every day. They love to swap stories with Joe and talk about “the good old days.”

He has been known to hop into his car to run a few errands in downtown Hibbing just for a change of pace.

Letters TO the Editor

The *Gopher Oversea'r* accepts and is willing to share the viewpoints of its readers who write Letters to the Editor. Publishing decisions are

made on questions of good taste and veteran’s interest.

The *Oversea'r* reserves the right to edit for accuracy, clarity, libel, and civility and reserves the right not to

publish a letter.

For a complete list of the Submission Guidelines, contact the editor or newspaper staff at 651-291-1757 or vfwmnoffice@gmail.com

WORD SEARCH #10

Turning 100 in 2021

In addition to the Minnesota VFW, Here is a small list of items that are celebrating 100 Years... Including our Past Department Commander Joe Jeanette!

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

- Baby Ruth
- Barrons Magazine
- Betty Crocker
- CheezIt Crackers
- Chicago Theatre
- Chuckles Candy
- Eskimo Pie

- Insulin
- Laughing Cow Cheese
- Lead Gasoline
- Lie Detector
- Lowes
- PDC Joe Jeanette
- Roller Coaster

- Rorschach Inkblot Test
- Tomb of Unknown Soldier
- Wheaties
- White Castle
- Wonder Bread
- Word Robot

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

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

Send stories and photos to the address in the “Letters From the Editor” article in the upper right corner of this page.

“Buddy” Poppy



VFW Poppy Bouquet



2021 MN VFW Poppy Card

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was the first organization to promote a nationwide distribution of Poppies made by disabled veterans.

The Poppy has become traditional as the Memorial Day flower and as the symbol of remembrance for military members who have lost their lives or their health in the defense of their country. Its significance has spread throughout the world. A distribution of artificial Poppies is conducted throughout the British Commonwealth and in many countries of Europe.

Through the national distribution of Poppies, millions of dollars are raised annually for the support of ten VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan and for the rehabilitation services for disabled veterans. Annually, over a million dollars have been provided for local relief programs throughout the nation.

It is important to note that since the Veterans of Foreign Wars holds a trademark on the “Buddy” Poppy, they are able to guarantee that all poppies that bear the name and the VFW label are genuine products made by disabled and needy

veterans. The name “Buddy” Poppy cannot legally be used by any other individual or organization.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is especially proud that its poppy distributions are conducted strictly and entirely by volunteers. No poppy workers are paid for their work. Their recompense comes from a sense of pride in helping the less fortunate.

About 100,000 volunteers aid in the distribution of poppies each year in the United States; at least 6,000 of them in Minnesota alone.

Although we emphasize Buddy Poppies on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, it is important to realize that the distribution of Buddy Poppies should be a year-round exercise. Each time a Post participates in an activity where the public will be present, Buddy Poppies should be present as a fund raising tool and simply to recognize our fallen comrades. Where the VFW appears, Buddy Poppies should be a constant reminder that we will never forget those who have perished in the name of liberty. Just as “They gave, Will You?” is a year-round thing, so should the distribution of VFW “Buddy” Poppies.

Looking for a Program that's Educational AND Entertaining?

Fundraising for THE BOYS OF '61!

Minnesota's Civil War Veterans Memorial

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



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

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

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

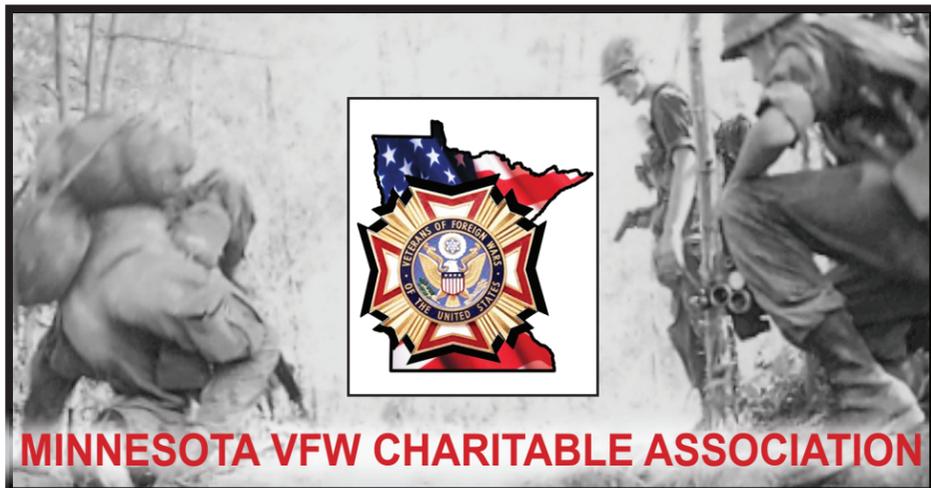
historicalexperiences.org

or contact the presenter at...

arnkind@historicalexperiences.org

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

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



MINNESOTA VFW CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION

The Veterans of Foreign Wars has been 'fighting' for Veterans since 1899. We have worked endlessly to gain the Benefits and Entitlements that Our Veterans deserve. For over 116 years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has spent millions of dollars and hours to Educate our Youth and build our Communities in the areas of Patriotism, Americanism and those things that are RIGHT for the United States of America. The members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars have placed their 'bodies and minds' between the enemies of this Great Nation to preserve the American way and the FREEDOM of not only the United States, but other nations as well.

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



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

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

- * Establish a monthly or annual deduction to the MN VFW Charitable Association from your checking account or credit card.
- * Designate your Donation to a Charitable Trust in the name of the MN VFW Charitable Association.
- * Establish a Charitable Gift Annuity to the MN VFW Charitable Association.
- * Simply make a donation to the MN VFW Charitable Association.
- * Donate to the VFW Outdoor Fund.
- * Donate through the MN VFW Charitable Association Annual Raffle Calendar.

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

For more information, please contact the Treasurer of the MN VFW Charitable Association at 651-291-1757 or email us at mnvfwcharitable@gmail.com or by writing to: VFW Charitable Association, 20 W. 12th St., Room B-5, St. Paul, MN 55155.



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

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

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

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

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Earmark for one of the following: _____ General Un-designated
 VFW Outdoor Fund Veterans Service VFW Programs