



VFW WISCONSIN



NEWS 2025



VOL. 42 NO. 5

JOURNEY TO HEALING TOGETHER

MARCH/APRIL 2025

HONOR THE CONTRACT

The Wisconsin Delegation rallies around the recipient of the VFW 2025 Congressional Award, Rep. Derrick Van Orden (WI-3), a 26-year retired Navy Seal and Life Member of Thomas Rooney VFW Post 1530 in La Crosse. Presented annually since 1964, the Award recognizes one House or Senate member for their significant legislative contributions on behalf of Veterans and military personnel.

Photo courtesy of PSC Jason Johns.



The event name may have changed – from VFW Legislative Conference to **VFW Washington Conference** in 2024 – but the mission remains the same: deliver the VFW 2025 Legislative Priorities to our nation’s lawmakers.

In the customary testimony before a special joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans’ Affairs, Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt said, “This isn’t charity. This is a contract. Everyone who served honorably, like every member of the VFW, met our end of this agreement. We demand our leaders do the same. By contract, you must ensure the VA has the resources and staff to provide Veterans their full earned benefits. This is not an ask. Honor the contract!”

Other events during the week included the Annual Voice of Democracy Parade of Winners and VFW and Auxiliary members from every Department lobbying their respective Legislators with the top Priorities for 2025. (More on page 15.)

Rest in Peace Laurel Ann Wiese

Wisconsin VFW Auxiliary Past Department President Laurel Ann Wiese, age 80, passed away on January 25, 2025 at Hospice Home of Hope in Fond du Lac. Visitation and services were held on January 28 and 29, at Keopsell Funeral Home in Mayville and St. Stephen Ev. Lutheran Church in Horicon, with interment at Oak Hill Cemetery in Horicon.

Born November 19, 1944 in Horicon, Laurel Ann was the daughter of Loran F. Patten (PSC, 1965-1966) and Lorene A. (Wagner) Patten, (PDP, 1961-1962), and a 1962 graduate of Horicon High School. She worked at Affiliated Products in Mayville, following her retirement from Mayville Metal.

As noted in a WI VFW NEWS feature just one year ago, Laurel Ann was the second of three generations of her family to serve as Auxiliary Dept. President, in between mother/grandmother Lorene and daughter/granddaughter Sherrie Rosenau. Laurel Ann’s first term was in 1993-1994, alongside State Commander Robert Munro

of Wisconsin Rapids, and her second year of service came 25 years later in 2018-2019, alongside State Commander Gundel Metz of Madison.

Notable items from the “Reach for the Stars” year (’93-’94) included a whopping 111 applications for the Lillian Campbell Medical Scholarship with six, \$500 scholarships awarded. The Annual Memorial Service remembered 470 Sisters who passed away during the year. We welcomed 525 new members. Eight Program Chairmen were recognized at the National Convention, with four First Place and four Runner-up awards.

Laurel Ann continued her successful service to Veterans and the Department in the years that followed, in a variety of National and Department Program Chairmanships, as well as District and Auxiliary level assignments. She was always willing to share her time and talents.



Laurel Ann Wiese
Auxiliary Dept. President
1993-1994 and 2018-2019

SEE WIESE, PAGE 6

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Your Sponsor Name **HERE!**

This *premier* space in our National Award-Winning newspaper is available for six issues annually, to one ELITE Sponsor. Don't miss the chance to support the Official Publication of the Wisconsin VFW!

Contact Quartermaster Tom Heath or Adjutant Adam Wallace at Headquarters TODAY!

Comrades, we are on fire!

Our membership numbers are climbing, and we are well on our way to hitting our 102% goal—one of the largest increases in recent history for Wisconsin. District 1 has already surpassed the mark of 102%—which District will be next? Now is **NOT** the time to slow down. Keep recruiting, keep engaging, and let's push even harder to bring in more eligible Veterans. If you know someone who served overseas, perhaps an old battle buddy, talk to them about the VFW and get them signed up today. Every new member strengthens our voice and ensures our mission continues for generations to come.

It was great seeing so many of you at Mid-Winter! I truly enjoy these Conferences—not only to conduct business but also to share in the camaraderie that makes this organization so special. Our next major event was the **VFW Washington Conference**, where I had the honor of representing you in D.C. alongside our legislative team. [See page 15.]

While we fight for Veterans' issues at the Federal level, we'll also be making our voices heard right here at home. **Mark your calendars for April 22—Veterans Day at the Wisconsin Capitol.** We need to show up, in force, with our caps on and hold our elected officials accountable. Let's make sure our Legislators know that Veterans' issues are a priority in Wisconsin!

We're also approaching election season, and this is **YOUR** opportunity to step up.

Ron Ramos
State Commander



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Nominations begin in March, Elections take place in April, and Installations must be done in May or before the State Convention in June. If you want to see continued growth and positive change, consider running for an Officer position. **Be the change!** The work we do—supporting Veterans, assisting their families, and serving our communities—doesn't just happen. It takes leadership, dedication, and action. And that starts with **YOU**.

Speaking of leadership, **State Convention is coming up in June**, and it's your chance to have a say in the future of our organization. Make sure your Post is in good standing so you can vote when the time comes: all Audits completed, Bonded, Election Report submitted, Delegate Dues paid, etc. This is **YOUR** Convention—your voice matters!

Keep up the outstanding work, and I look forward to seeing you on my travels throughout the rest of the year. Let's finish strong and make this a record-breaking year for membership!

Ty Letto
State Sr. Vice
Commander



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Comrades,

I hope this article finds you doing well and surviving the winter weather that Wisconsin continues to throw at us. The month of January is typically lighter for the Line Officers than in other months. This allowed Lisa and I to take a much-needed vacation to Punta Cana and recharge the batteries.

As you can imagine, January was not completely without VFW travel. I had the pleasure of kicking off the New Year with a visit to the Milwaukee VA for the first time.

VFW Representative and Past State Commander John Dahl, VFW Deputy Representative Ken Kieck, and VFW Auxiliary Representative Nancy Ustruck were in attendance also. Before touring the facility, I met with Milwaukee VA Medical Center Executive Director Jim McLain to discuss Veteran care, including the importance of continuous glucose monitors for type 2 diabetes Prevention Care/Whole Health care for Veterans.

I also presented a \$700 check on behalf of the Department of Wisconsin VFW for unfunded Veteran care at the facilities. PSC Dahl and Comrade Kieck presented a \$500 check on behalf of Post 10519, to go towards pulmonary care for our Veterans. The visit included a tour of the facilities, including the Spinal Cord Injury/Disorder Center, a shining jewel of the facilities. I thoroughly enjoyed the visit and am looking forward to returning again during my Command year. Last stop of the day in Milwaukee was the VFW Service Office and a nice visit with the staff to thank them for all their hard work throughout the year!

It was then off to the District 9 Winter Meeting in Strum, where I witnessed the incredible work that is being done by District 9 with the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen programs and their presentation of awards to the winners. District Commander Krist Beseler did a great job conducting the meeting and the Auxiliary had an awesome raffle with a VFW cutting board hand-made by the local High School students.

In the May edition of the NEWS, look for me to tell you about Servant Leadership and its connection to what you do for Veterans. Until next time, remember to make it count in everything that you do, because you make a difference in the life of a Veteran every day!

VFW DAY OF SERVICE

Be a part of the 4th Annual Day of Service that kicks off on Saturday, May 3, 2025. Like all things VFW, make it yours and participate whenever it works for your membership in the month of May. This is an opportunity for us to band together with our communities and make a difference in lives of those who support us. No matter how big or small the event might be, together, we can make a meaningful impact and demonstrate that the VFW with the support of our Auxiliary, is truly #StillServing.

It can be a struggle to come up with ideas of what activity to choose for such an event, but the VFW has you covered. From brainstorming to execution, the VFW Day of Service Resources offers a comprehensive guide to make your event a success. Whether you're organizing a community cleanup, hosting a food drive or even a meal, these resources provide assistance to ensure a seamless planning process. Dive into the toolkit and let the VFW help you turn your event ideas into impactful actions. Visit <https://todaysvfw.org/vfw-day-of-service-resources/> for more information.

Renee L. Simpson
State Jr. Vice
Commander



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The Day of Service is a chance to embody the spirit of community and service that defines the VFW. As we approach the end of the VFW 2024–2025 year, let's ignite the flames of enthusiasm and commitment. By staying true to our mission and embodying the spirit of service, we can ensure that our efforts resonate far beyond this year. Let's rally together, embrace new challenges, and carry the torch of excellence as we close this chapter with a resounding BANG.

Register your Day of Service at <https://todaysvfw.org/vfw-day-of-service/>.

STATE OFFICERS

Greetings VFW family!

We are now midway into the command year 2024–2025, and by the time you read this, we will have had our Mid-Winter Conference. Hope that everyone that attended had a great time with the new highlights and focus on the winners for Teacher of the Year, Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen. Congratulations to all of the Red Carpet Awardees, Posts and Districts. This is a great way to connect and network with your VFW family! Keep on pressing forward because before you know it, our VFW State Convention will be here.

Speaking of our VFW State Convention, now is the time to submit your community reports for the next part of your All-State and All-American qualification items! Take another look at the 2024–2025 Commanders' Book, starting on page 26, for qualifications. So far, one of the qualifications is met by 41 Posts and one District that are at or above, 102% in membership, and could make their goal as an All-State and/or All-American Post/District. There are many other Posts on their way to achieving 102% as well. Keep it going! Continue getting your All-State book together, as the deadline to turn it in to WI VFW Headquarters is by May 2, 2025. Contact HQ or me if you have any questions.

We have all been very busy within our great state. I saw many great things when I was on the road in January. I represented our Department by traveling to Janesville VFW Post 1621, with the members of the Post, District members, District 1 Commander Jim Cairo and District 1 Assistant Adjutant Manny Salas very welcoming and hospitable. The Post members are very proud of their Post and rightfully so. Had the honor of VFW Post 1621 Commander Michael Zientek giving a tour of the Post, seeing the great things they have done with their building.

I also experienced great camaraderie outside our state when I was on the road again February 5-9, 2025 to the VFW National Home. Had the honor of attending the National Home 100th Anniversary Celebration Gala, traveling with our District 7 Trustee Michele Rathke. We had a great time meeting many Veterans from across the United States and the Pacific; our National Home staff and our VFW Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt, Senior Vice C-in-C Carol Whitmore and Junior Vice C-in-C Timothy Peters. We had an awesome showing from Wisconsin with everyone looking fabulous. The Gala was a great success for the VFW National Home with a successful fundraiser, great camaraderie, great fun and lots of smiles!

Let's keep going strong and keep smiling because you are all awesome! Mary Ann's vision is in play due to you doing your part with her guiding us and State Commander Ron Ramos leading us. Keep on going, because I know we all will get there together!

Carla McAndrew
Chief-of-Staff



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“The HQ Dispatch”

Greetings Comrades,

Mid-Winter has come and gone! We hope that Conference was educational, engaging, and worthwhile for those able to attend. We also hope you enjoyed the new banquet format, spotlighting the achievements of our Youth Essay winners. Another congratulations to our Red Carpet winning Posts as well! Continue to be the trailblazers in membership as we move into the last quarter of the year!

The next few months are crucial to the health and sustainability of Posts. As a reminder, the first round of nominations for Officers is in March, followed by final nominations and elections in April, with installation required after the elections, but before State Convention. It is acceptable to nominate and elect an individual who is not present at the meeting, but only as long as they have expressly written that they will accept the nomination. (Either printed or an email will satisfy that requirement). Please look at the National Bylaws and Manual of Procedures on the proper method of electing your Post Officers.

It is critical that your Election Reports are entered by the end of April. The preferred method of entering Election Reports is by the current QM at www.vfw.org in the Online Membership System (OMS). We also accept election reports by mail to State HQ. There are a few Posts that still mail them to National HQ. Doing this delays the entry of your Election Report by about a month. We discourage you from mailing it to National HQ.

Also due at the end of April is the Department Delegate dues report/payment. ALL Posts are required to fill out and pay this report, regardless of whether you plan to attend Convention or not. The easiest way to submit and pay for this is online at www.vfwwi.org in the Members Only section.

Finally, there are unfortunate cases that Posts may not be able to fill their slate of Officers. If this is looking to be the case for your Post, we encourage you to reach out to your District Commander to communicate that struggle, so they or Department can try to assist in any way we can. The success of our Posts is the collective success of the Department.

For those reading this, we sincerely thank you for your continued dedication to the VFW. Reach out to us if we can be of any assistance.

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JOIN VFW DAY OF SERVICE



Veteran-led community service events kick off May 3, 2025.

GET INVOLVED NOW

vfw.org/DayofService



STATE OFFICERS

Greeting Comrades,

I had a very exciting column regarding Bylaws prepared for you ... however, "things" as they always do, have transpired which directed me to a new topic. In 1967, Aretha Franklin had her first number one hit on the Billboard Hot 100 songs (for over two weeks), as well as being number one on Rolling Stone's list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All-Time, with her song **Respect**.

According to Merriam-Webster, when used as a noun, "Respect" is a feeling of high regard or esteem for someone or something. When used as a verb, "Respect" is to consider worthy of high regard. So why has it become the subject of my column? The position of Judge Advocate exposes you to a multitude of situations, either directly or indirectly, on the happenings of the Department, Districts and Posts throughout the state. The majority of these situations reflect the great work the Posts are doing which extol the virtues and values of the VFW and our Department.

However, that is not always the case! I am by no means accusing anyone, a Post, or District, of being disrespectful. However, I am reminding everyone, as Veterans and Auxiliary Members, we *should* hold ourselves to a higher standard. Remember our purpose as outlined in our Congressional Charter:

The purposes of the corporation are fraternal, patriotic, historical, charitable, and educational, and are: To preserve and strengthen comradeship among its members;

To assist worthy comrades; To perpetuate the memory and history of our dead, and to assist their surviving spouses and orphans; To maintain true allegiance to the Government of the United States, and fidelity to its Constitution and laws; To fos-

George Stoeber
Judge Advocate

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ter true patriotism; To maintain and extend the institutions of American freedom; and To preserve and defend the United States from all enemies.

I acknowledge that we live in the greatest country in the world and our constitution provides us with certain freedoms that I highly value. I also acknowledge that we live in a country comprised of individuals, from all walks of life, whom we have daily, weekly, or monthly interactions with. Because of our constitutional freedoms, we do not have to agree with each other, however our laws hopefully keep these interactions civil. As I have mentioned in previous columns that I have written, your actions with your comrades and the public are a direct reflection of the VFW! So do not let petty jealousies or trivial personalities influence the way you represent our organization, and let's always uphold the obligations of unselfish comradeship and loyalty to our organization and to the government of the United States of America.

Finally, please note: if you or your Post are contemplating a Bylaw change to the Department or National Bylaws, now is the time to submit them to Headquarters so the Bylaws Committee can properly review them for consideration at the Department Convention in June.

Ilein Taipe
State Chaplain

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Hi Comrades,

Hope the holidays were blessed. Hope this winter we are keeping warm and not just staying in our homes alone but keeping in community at either the Posts, with family and always connecting with friends.

We had our Mid-Winter event and not only did we gather, but let's continue to. In partnership with our towns and neighbors to come together not only for VFW purposes but to gather in unity and keep building in strength. We lift one another through conversation and are there for one another through any challenges. This takes genuine, humble and true comradeship with each other, with not only the ones you know in your Posts and Districts but welcoming and meeting new Veterans to our organization.

I pray for you, your Posts, and your Districts. As we continue with winter and welcome spring soon, I pray that we continue to glorify our Father. Let's surrender our worries and know that our almighty Lord is always with you, as you call him anytime for anything. Thank you Post and District Chaplains for praying for your comrades. Please continue. Anything you need from me, a listening ear, a prayer request or any support, please reach out to me. God Bless you all today, tomorrow and always.

At this time, I pray for our nation, our leaders and our hearts. Holy Spirit, we ask you to fill our city, state, and national governmental leaders with wisdom, understanding, discernment, and knowledge. Grant them favor, increase their faith, and prepare them to pursue your excellence, and fulfill your purposes.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." — Proverbs 3:5-6

Comrades:

There are two items to discuss this issue: **Duties of the Trustees** and required **Bonding**.

Trustees are elected in staggered three-year terms so theoretically the knowledge and experience base they formed doesn't simply evaporate after each election. Each Trustee needs to review their job duties in Sec. 218(a)(11), Manual of Procedure.

The Trustees need to be present at each meeting where the Quartermaster reports on receipts and expenditures. This is generally once a month. They should review the monthly report for obvious discrepancies such as non-authorized expenditures or maybe lack of deposits. Then, quarterly, they conduct a detailed review of the ledger, bank statements, checkbook register and other documents needed to verify the information on the Quarterly Audit. Please note, and I've said this before, they start with the previously approved Audit to make sure the **ending balances** there **are the same** as the **beginning balances** on the current audit. Also important is that the starting and ending balances in funds must equal the total bank account adjusted balances.

If either of these conditions (quarter to quarter, or funds to bank) don't balance, it would be inappropriate to sign the Audit form, which would be essentially approving a faulty report. Don't bother sending it to HQ either since we'll send it back to you for corrections.

Moving on to Bonding, Sec. 218(a)(5)a., requires the Quartermaster to secure a Bond at least equal to the anticipated liquid assets for which he/she may be accountable. In most cases the Quartermaster is the "accountable" Officer of the Post per Sec. 218(a)(5)b. Liquid assets generally means any cash, bank account or investment that is easily portable, or redeemable with only one signature – like a CD, believe it or not. Generally, VFW Bonding is very cost effective. However, commercial Bonds for larger amounts may be a better option. If you choose a commercially available Bond, try to get the starting date as August 1, and make sure you send a copy to HQ. A surety type Bond is needed per Sec. 703, National Bylaws. From what I understand, if the Bond has a deductible, it is the wrong type.

And as a parting bonus, remember to file the IRS 990 form for your Post. Those whose fiscal year ended December 31 need to file a 990 by May 15. Don't put your nonprofit status in jeopardy; file promptly every year. Hope to see you at the June Convention.

Leroy Jansky
State Inspector

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REMINDERS!

**LAST CALL for
Frank N. Brown Scholarship
applications.**

Deadline is April 30, 2025

[CLICK HERE for info and application](#)



**CONGRATULATIONS
to the WINNERS of the
New Year's Re-Draw Bonanza
Sweepstakes
and THANK YOU to all who
donated.**

The complete list of 70 winners
is at: [RE-DRAW WINNERS' LIST](#)

Wisconsin VFW News Production Schedule

May 2025 Issue Vol. 42, No. 6 Deadline to Editor: April 4, 2025

Department Convention • June 11-14, 2025

Wisconsin VFW News

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Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars

Planning for Upcoming Meetings

- **2025 Department Convention**
Wed.-Sat., June 11-14, 2025
Madison Marriott West • \$124 + taxes
1313 John Q Hammons Dr., Middleton, WI 53562 • 608-831-2000
- **2025-2026 Program Kickoff/Council of Administration**
Fri.-Sat., July 11-12, 2025
Hotel Mead • \$92/\$102 + taxes
451 E. Grand Ave., Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494 • 715-423-1500
- **2026 Department Mid-Winter Conference**
Fri.-Sat., February 6-7, 2026
Hilton Appleton Paper Valley • \$129 + taxes
333 W. College Ave., Appleton, WI 54911 • 920-733-8000
- **2026 Department Convention**
Wed.-Sat., June 10-13, 2026
Holiday Inn & Suites/Central WI Expo Center • \$109 + taxes
1000 Imperial Ave., Rothschild, WI 54474 • 715-355-1111

NOTE: In most instances, special room blocks include the night before events start.

Greetings Comrades!

Hard to believe it is 2025, but here we are a couple months in already! This winter has brought about not only seasonal allergies, but also an increase in flu and cold cases across the nation. Flu and COVID vaccinations are available at regional VA hospitals and clinics, often without an appointment necessary. Eligible Veterans can also get no-cost flu and COVID shots at retailers and pharmacies within their communities. This includes anyone enrolled in VA who received care from a VA or in-network community provider in the past 24 months. Please remember, if you feel ill and are not getting better, try not to be the tough soldier for too long, as this can sometimes turn into more serious illnesses such as pneumonia.

In my previous article [November 2024], I talked about how to recognize signs and symptoms of PTSD and what to do when you recognize those symptoms or when someone is seeking assistance. So now let's talk about some things that can help with PTSD symptoms. Everyone is different, and every symptom or reaction may be different, but one of the best alternative options to traditional treatment is to get out of the house and try something new.

1. Get Outdoors: Getting outdoors can be extremely beneficial to not only your physical well-being, but also your mental well-being. The combination of fresh air and the escape from the daily grind can bring a

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sense of peace. Whether that is just going for a walk, sitting on a deck, or enjoying recreational activities such as fishing, hunting, or hiking, just get outside and take a breath.

2. Try out the VA Whole Health Program: The VA Whole Health Program is offered through the VA healthcare system and focuses on what matters to you, not what is wrong with you. Through this program, you will explore ways to work on your health and well-being by focusing on your goals, values, and needs. More information can be found at <https://www.va.gov/wholehealth/>

Remember, soldiers get into routines and habits, which can be hard to break. The only way to break the routine is to "soldier up" and get out there and live life! We can tackle PTSD together, even if it is one chip from the rock at a time, we will get it done. Remember, it affects us all. God Bless.

**WISCONSIN VFW
FOUNDATION UPDATE**

It is the mission of the Wisconsin VFW Foundation Inc. (501c3), to help fulfill America's promise to its military personnel and Veterans, through support of Wisconsin's Veterans Homes, VA Medical Centers, Veteran Cemeteries, residents of the VFW National Home – Wisconsin House and other worthy entities. The Foundation also supports VFW programs that foster patriotism and scholarships among Wisconsin's youth.

Grant Applications are now being accepted for consideration at the annual VFW State Convention in June. All materials must be received by the Foundation Secretary, either by email or regular mail, **by May 15, 2025, NO EXCEPTIONS.** A complete narrative of the necessary information, along with the required application form can be found at on the State VFW website at vfwwi.org, or by request from the Foundation Secretary-Treasurer.

We are now also accepting applications for the **2025 Wisconsin VFW Foundation Mentorship Grant.** This grant is for mentors within the VFW that are providing outstanding support to other VFW members with mentorship. This award goes directly to the "mentor" to award their efforts for the betterment of the VFW. Two grants will be awarded based on input from the 2024-2025 Foundation Board Members.

The application form is also available on the State VFW website at vfwwi.org, or by request from the Foundation Secretary. **Again, the deadline is also May 15, 2025, NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Thank you for your continued donations to the Foundation – your support is greatly appreciated. And **don't forget:** the Wisconsin VFW Foundation is available to all Posts for a "pass-through" for your local events and fundraisers, allowing you to provide **tax-free donation status** to those supporting your Post. Please contact me for the details. The process is simple and the rewards are infinite!

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Veterans have long been a cornerstone of American society, providing essential service and sacrifice to protect the freedoms we hold dear. In recognition of our contributions, legislative efforts focused on supporting Veterans has been a crucial part of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Once again, we sent a strong Wisconsin Delegation to the National Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. earlier this month. We will also participate in the Veterans Day at the Wisconsin Capitol on April 22, with Legislative Chairman Jordan Tilleson leading the charge.

Veterans' legislative issues encompass a wide range of topics, from healthcare and employment support to educational opportunities and disability benefits. In the U.S., laws such as the Veterans Health Care, Capital Asset, and Business Improvement Act of 2003 and the Post-9/11 GI Bill have played an instrumental role in improving the quality of life for Veterans. These efforts are spearheaded by our Washington Legislative office, staffed by people dedicated to ensuring that Veterans are not left behind after their service.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) plays a central role in implementing these policies, offering a variety of benefits and services that help Veterans access healthcare, housing, and educational support. However, the VA has faced challenges with efficiency and resource allocation over the years, prompting legislative action to improve its operations. For example, the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 was passed to increase Veterans' access to care by allowing them to seek healthcare outside of the VA system if they were facing long wait times.

In addition to healthcare, Veterans' employment issues are frequently addressed in legislative reform. Veterans often encounter difficulty transitioning from military service to civilian careers, and many legislative measures have been enacted to ease this transition. Legislation such as the TAP promotion Act have been introduced to ensure that Veteran Service Organizations are present as service members are transitioning to civilian life so that they understand all of the benefits they have earned.

Further, legislative bodies have recognized the importance of education for Veterans, with measures such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which provides financial support for Veterans to pursue higher education. This initiative has significantly boosted the number of Veterans obtaining college degrees, which in turn contributes to their ability to thrive in civilian life.

Despite these significant efforts, the fight for Veterans' rights and support continues. Legislative work remains critical to addressing gaps in healthcare, improving mental health services, and ensuring that all Veterans have the opportunity to succeed after service. Many Veterans face challenges such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), homelessness, and unemployment, which require ongoing attention from lawmakers.

In conclusion, legislative work dedicated to Veterans is an ongoing process of ensuring that those who have served the country are provided with the necessary resources and support. By addressing issues such as healthcare, employment, education, and mental health, the VFW is helping to improve the lives of Veterans and ensure that they are not forgotten after their service ends. Continued legislative efforts will be essential in meeting the evolving needs of Veterans, ensuring their well-being and honoring their sacrifices.

Greetings all comrades –

The Service Office Team and I hope the new year is going well for you! We are working diligently to make sure we are still serving all our Veterans and their families. With the beginning of this new year, we are still looking forward to some of the new office updates. Hopefully we can get this done in the next few months. We have also added a few things to the office décor that some of our Veterans have donated. It is really coming along.

We still have a very heavy case load, and it is growing, but the Team and I are making sure we are doing our best, ensuring we are working efficiently. We are also asking our VFW comrades for help doing this is by making sure that Veterans/Claimants trying to get ahold of us, leave a full message on our voice mail, giving the full name of the Veteran/Claimant, along with the other Identifying information.

VA news and updates regarding benefits and our Region:

With the new year and the new administration there are a lot of concerns and questions that keep arising. I would like to address these issues head on and as clear as possible. Our VA Milwaukee Regional Office Director, Duane Honeycutt has retired. We wish him all the best in his well-earned next chapter. I have met his successor, Bruce Voigt, and I am sure he will still hold the standards that Mr. Honeycutt did.

While changes in administrations may lead to adjustments, according to the Acting Secretary of the VA, Todd Hunter: "Our mission remains constant: ensuring Veterans and their families continue to receive all the benefits they have earned. Transitions can bring with them change and uncertainty, so we are committed to providing updated information and guidance as soon as we're able. Please remain focused on our core mission of serving Veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors. That dedication to serving those who have served will remain our guiding principle."

Tim Neary
State Veterans
Service Officer
VFW
414-902-5748
timothy.neary01@va.gov



Serving from January 20 until February 4, 2025, Hunter also addressed the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) January 27, 2025, memorandum (M-25-13), regarding temporarily pausing certain agency grant, loan, and financial assistance programs. The VA conducted a comprehensive analysis of all VA Federal financial assistance programs and consulted with OMB, and determined that all 44 of its financial assistance programs will continue uninterrupted and that all VA programs and operations will continue uninterrupted. In other words, the OMB memorandum will have no impact on VA healthcare, benefits, or beneficiaries. The VA is also being affected by a January 28, 2025 email from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), presenting a deferred resignation offer to Federal employees. This could have an effect on the time it takes to process claims. [Hopefully, this will be resolved by the time this is published.]

As you know, former U.S. Rep. Doug Collins was confirmed as the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs. He represented Georgia in the U.S. House of Representatives (2013–2021) and the State Legislature (2007–2013). He served in the Navy as a Chaplain and is a Colonel in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, serving as a Chaplain. Collins is the first Post-9/11 Veteran to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Please continue to reach out to the Service Office Team with any questions or claim needs you may have.



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SCAN ME

MEMBERSHIP

Current Membership Totals By District

Dist.	Life	New	Reinstate	Continuous	Total	Adj. Prior Year	Percentage
1	2269	114	79	303	2765	2665	103.75%
2	3121	42	17	282	3462	3537	97.88%
3	731	5	5	97	838	850	98.59%
4	1155	15	5	108	1283	1283	100.00%
6	1705	14	6	135	1860	1881	98.88%
7	2113	34	9	212	2368	2456	96.41%
8	1811	42	7	186	2046	2047	99.95%
9	2525	61	15	117	2718	2772	98.05%
10	1308	25	8	186	1527	1565	97.57%
11	1606	14	13	146	1779	1896	93.83%
99	1466	72	12	172	1722	1861	92.53%
Totals	19810	438	176	1944	22368	22813	98.05%

Totals as of March 1, 2025
376 Legacy Life Members

Greetings Comrades,

I want to start out by taking a moment to thank you for the hard work and effort in meeting our membership gateways up to this point! The VFW Year has only a bit more than 4 months remaining. Our goal of 102% in Membership is just over the horizon, reachable if we all pull together.

At the time of this publication, our membership is at 98.05%. We need only 902 more members to meet our goal of 102%. We can do this! Yes, it will take some effort, but it is obtainable and with the help of each and everyone of you it can be done!

So far our state has 196 recruiters. These 196 people have been credited for signing up at least one person into our organization. Recently, I have sent out several lists of Unpaid members, including Department-at-Large, Relocated and Prior Members. These are tools that District Commanders, Membership Team Members and Posts can use to reach out and ensure that each of the members on the lists are contacted, reminded and requested to renew their membership. We want them to know how important their membership is to us.

These three lists have a total of 7,357 expired members, 1,389 of which have expired

Randy Engness
State Membership
Chairman



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engnessr@gmail.com



in just the last 2 years! Just getting expired members back alone we should easily meet and surpass our goal. Do not let any opportunity to reinstate, renew, or recruit go by without doing all you can to make it happen! District Commanders, Post Commanders and Membership Committee Chairs: If you need expired lists please contact me for assistance.

Don't forget our Auxiliary! Talk about and ask about family members. Explain to them what the VFW Auxiliary is. This is also a way to not only help out our Auxiliary, but get the family involved doing activities and functions together.

So let's finish strong! **Recruit, Engage, Inspire, Retain!**

TOP RECRUITING UPDATE

through 3-1-2025

Recruiter	Post	District	Recruits
James A. Cairo	11038	1	54
Robert E. Haisler	11038	1	35
Jason T. Coffey	11038	1	18
Nate J. Haumschild	2115	9	18
David G. Green	10818	9	10
Dena M. McCormick	11038	1	9
Michael P. Morgan	6375	1	7
Jack C. Voight	2778	8	7
Robin L. Drogsvold	328	2	6
Thomas E. Heath	1621	1	5
Michael F. Fischer	11038	1	5
Peter A. Pemrich	1621	1	4
Scott J. Weber	6375	1	4
John D. McCoy	7308	1	4
Phillip D. Allen	7308	1	4
Tami Zalewski	2260	2	4
Kerry E. McAllen	7591	2	4
Christopher T. Ankele	6003	7	4
Aaron Volling	3635	8	4
Randy L. Engness	2204	9	4
Bartley G. Mauch	7694	11	4
James E. Weadge	1621	1	3
Ed A. Robbins	2306	1	3
Daniel E. McKee	7308	1	3
Curtis R. Gruenewald	1163	2	3
Tyrone L. Letto	1163	2	3
Gundel M. E. Metz	1318	2	3
Steven J. Eisenhauer	1318	2	3
Giles E. Svehlek	9387	2	3
Gary L. Friske	9511	2	3
Bradley L. Smith	2895	4	3
Dennis E. Jones	1908	6	3
John P. Wierer	7534	8	3
David A. Zien	305	9	3
Leroy G. Jansky	1038	9	3
Mark T. Schiltgen	2115	9	3
Richard W. Byers	2115	9	3
John R. Liesenfelder	7300	10	3
De Witt H. Woodworth	1530	11	3

Plus another 137 signed with no named Recruiter.
Thank you to all 196 of our Recruiters —
keep up the great work!

THE CURRENT LEADERBOARD

as of 3-1-2025

As we approach the final quarter of our Command Year, a hearty salute to these 41 Posts that have reached **or exceeded** 102% in membership:

- Post 11038, Rochester – 170.58%
- Post 8482, Oak Creek – 142.10%
- Post 3635, Florence – 130.55%
- Post 2115, Hudson – 118.42%
- Post 2336, Baraboo – 118.18%
- Post 7898, Woodruff – 117.50%
- Post 2063, Crivitz – 115.00%
- Post 6375, Elkhorn – 110.89%
- Post 7817, Westboro – 110.00%
- Post 8770, Big Falls – 109.09%
- Post 7444, Armstrong Creek – 108.33%
- Post 10533, Shullsburg – 108.10%
- Post 10170, Mayville – 108.00%
- Post 7534, Howard – 107.35%
- Post 2895, Cudahy – 106.15%
- Post 6709, Waupun – 106.06%
- Post 6003, Oxford – 105.66%
- Post 10393, Boscobel – 105.26%
- Post 7692, Freedom – 105.12%
- Post 9677, Bellevue – 104.67%
- Post 8314, Gillett – 104.34%
- Post 9202, Germantown – 104.25%
- Post 10263, Pardeeville – 104.16%
- Post 8527, Athens – 104.10%
- Post 3143, Rhinelander – 103.75%
- Post 10195, Rosendale – 103.44%
- Post 10388, Franksville – 103.44%
- Post 328, Stoughton – 103.43%
- Post 8813, Peshtigo – 103.38%
- Post 7308, Pleasant Prairie – 103.35%
- Post 9440, Highland – 103.33%
- Post 3434, Hillpoint – 103.22%
- Post 1163, Beaver Dam – 103.03%
- Post 9057, Thorp – 102.94%
- Post 2126, Menasha – 102.77%
- Post 5470, Whitewater – 102.70%
- Post 6179, Kellnersville – 102.63%
- Post 2241, Neillsville – 102.43%
- Post 8375, Silver Lake – 102.22%
- Post 8512, Almena – 102.22%
- Post 8329, Barnes Twosp. – 102.00%

And a hearty **YOU CAN DO IT** to the 52 Posts that have reached at least 100% and are just a few new members away from 102%+. Let's help Commander Ramos make it a great year to honor the memory of Mary Ann Christopherson.

2024 – 2025 MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE

This challenge between our Posts will continue for three more months, so your Post still has an opportunity to earn a Monthly Winner spot and entries into the Grand Prize Drawing. Visit vfwwi.org and log in to the Members Only link for the details and how to report your monthly results. Good luck!

CONGRATULATIONS to our latest Membership Challenge Monthly Winners

January 2025

- Division 1 Post 7591, Madison - Day
- Division 2 Post 11038, Rochester
- Division 3 None qualified
- Division 4 Post 8338, Barron
- Division 5 None qualified

February 2025

- Division 1 Post 7308, Pleasant Prairie
- Division 2 Post 6375, Elkhorn
- Division 3 Post 8280, Peplin
- Division 4 None qualified
- Division 5 None qualified

Each Monthly Division Winner receives an entry into the Grand Prize Drawing for \$1,000 for their Post. Congratulations!



It's not the price you pay
to become a member.
It's the price you paid
to become eligible.

Recruit, engage, inspire, retain!



**SAVE
The
DATE**

**Veterans Day
at the Capitol
April 22, 2025**

- Gather at Monona Terrace for informational session and discussions
- Lunch
- Capitol Rally
- Meet with representatives

Registration coming soon at wilegion.org

Sponsored By:



Comrades,
I hope this latest edition of the VFW NEWS finds you well. As many of you are aware, the State Legislative Session started in January 2025. Your Legislative Committee has been working hard to chat with many of your State Representatives and Senators to keep our legislative priorities in the front of their minds. We are continuing with last session's issues that we did not get passed. The Disabled Veteran Property Tax Credit being lowered; the MIA Recovery Project funding; and Tuition Remission for Veterans and their families are still our three priorities. I am cautiously optimistic about the Property Tax Credit Bill for this session, given the fact that we were able to get it passed through the State Assembly unanimously last session. We did receive word from the Governor's Office that he plans to put our priorities in his Biennial Budget like he did last session. Since this writing, we did see the Governor's version of the budget the week of February 18. Once we find out if our priorities get "lined out" by the legislators, then we will enact our plan for standalone bills. With that said, **SAVE THE DATE** for a

Jordan Tilleson
State Legislative
Chair
VFW
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Veterans Day at the Capitol (VDATE) for **Tuesday April 22, 2025!** We NEED to flood the Capitol with VFW caps to let our Legislators know what our needs are and to get face time with them to talk about our priorities/Veteran issues. *The hard truth is that Veteran Issues are not a priority of this Legislative Session and without us showing up in force, we will continue to not be a priority.* Our first VDATE event in 2023 was a lot of fun and we had a lot of positive feedback from those that spent the day with us. All are welcome and I hope that you join us this time!
If you have not been receiving my Legislative updates and Calls to action emails I have sent out through the VoterVoice app, please go to <https://votervoicenet.com/VFWWI/home> to register or hit the QR code on page 4.
To wrap up, we should be excited for this session. I encourage all of you reading this to get involved in your local and state level politics. The world needs more Veteran Advocates! I appreciate all your support, and I am honored to represent you at the Capitol! Hug your Comrades, Eat Hot dogs, and Stay Fashionable!

Wiese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

When a vacancy occurred in the Department Officers' Line, Laurel Ann decided to stand for election as Jr. Vice President in 2016, which led to her "Reaching for the Stars for Veterans" year in 2018-2019. By her "second time around", we awarded six, \$1,000 Lillian Campbell Medical Scholarships. We remembered 313 deceased members and when National Convention rolled around, Laurel Ann was welcomed into the National Circle of Excellence.

Her important service and involvement continued, with multiple appointments as Audit Chairman and her election as National District Council Member #11, representing Wisconsin and Iowa in 2023. She was also able to support daughter Sherrie in her own term as Dept. President in 2023-2024. Unfortunately, as Laurel Ann's health deteriorated, she did have to resign the Council position last summer, as her travel became much more limited. Those who were able to stay in contact with



LEFT: Then Dept. President Laurel Ann Wiese awaits the Presentation of Flags at the 2018 National Convention with SVP Mary Brown (left) and JVP Linda Schluter (right). Rita Byers photo.



RIGHT: President Laurel Ann and her Commander "Gundy" were great sports at the VFW National Home Fall Festival, honoring the Dr. Seuss "Cat in the Hat" theme perfectly. Rita Byers photo.

her know that she kept her great sense of humor and soldiered on as best she could until her passing.

Laurel Ann is survived by daughters Sherrie (John) Rosenau and Debbie (Wally) Ballard; eight grandchildren; 12

great-grandchildren; one brother David C. (Wendy) Patten and nieces, nephews and other relatives, along with a large VFW

and Auxiliary family near and dear to her. Rest in peace, good and faithful servant. You are loved, remembered and missed.



LEFT: Then-National Conductress Jane Reape is welcomed to Wisconsin as National Rep. for the 2019 State Convention by PDP Karen Johnson (left) and PDP/then-President Laurel Ann Wiese. Karen Janssen photo.



RIGHT: Then-NDCM #11 Laurel Ann (second from left) enjoyed a visit to the District 10 Auxiliary in April of 2024, shown here with members of Phillips Auxiliary 5778 (from left): President Bonnie Welch; SVP Therese Trojak and Secretary Maureen Trojak. Photo courtesy of Maureen Trojak.

TAPS TAPS TAPS TAPS TAPS TAPS TAPS

This listing reflects the most recent reporting of deceased members obtained from VFW National Headquarters. While every effort is made to provide accurate and timely information, it does not necessarily reflect the year of the members' passing. Please contact Editor Marla J. Morgan (wivfweditor@gmail.com) with any questions or corrections.

Post	Name	City	Post	Name	City	Post	Name	City	Post	Name	City
305	Bernard Blodgett	Elk Mound	2115	John Sack	Willow River, MN	6352	Robert Wurl	Stratford	9511	Pascual Machica	Mount Horeb
305	David Brown	Altoona	2119	Thomas Menting	Mountain	6352	Frederick Zoellner	Stratford	9536	Donald Madden	Wisconsin Rapids
305	Neil Korn	Chippewa Falls	2119	Elmer Vander Velden	Green Bay	6375	Grant McMillin, Jr.	Colorado Spgs, CO	9677	Herman Joas	Green Bay
305	John Ryberg	Eau Claire	2126	Raymond Racette	Appleton	6377	Allen Wenzel	Sussex	9692	Michael Milliken	Winslow, IL
328	David Spengler	Fitchburg	2312	John Brodie	Thiensville	6498	Chester Grobschmidt	Oak Creek	9924	Norbert Prange	Howards Grove
388	Franklin Lewitzke	Wausau	2336	Russell Hasenbalg	Baraboo	6498	John Kucera	Franklin	10197	John Van Hollen	Mims, FL
664	Lyle Sanderfoot	Combined Locks	2344	Myron Reuter	Lancaster	6498	Wasy Romance	Brecksville, OH	10203	Douglas Alderton	Rhineland
664	Lyle Suprise	Bear Creek	2653	Harold Klitz	Franksville	6707	Daniel Koenig	Kiel	10262	John Hanson	Plover
987	Michael Quindt	Baraboo	2653	Garold Piller	Antigo	6769	David Husby	Cumberland	10262	Guy Mockler	Custer
1039	Robert Cramer	Menomonie	2687	Richard Collins	Merrill	6858	Duane Schneider	Brodhead	10331	Emmett Pulver	King
1318	Don Eisenhauer	Lincoln, NE	2723	Leland Hill	Shawano	7080	Norman Clark	Kirbyville, TX	10388	Harold Davitz	Mayville
1318	John Fitzgerald	Lodi	2723	Warren Sperberg	Shawano	7232	Joseph Heil, Sr.	Eau Claire	10388	Thomas O'Dell	Milwaukee
1318	Robert Zimmerman	Tempe, AZ	2778	William Fenner	Wausaukee	7233	Felix Turcotte	Winter	10393	Lawrence Zinck	Boscobel
1382	Darwin Dade	Tomah	2778	Irvin Fuller	Seymour	7591	Russell Jenkins	McFarland	10394	Terry McRae	Clarkdale, AZ
1393	Douglas Schaefer	West Bend	2778	James Mielke	Hartland	7591	Richard Kalashian	Madison	10407	Leon Maierhafer	Fremont
1530	Richard Kubal	La Crosse	2778	Irvin Scherer	Appleton	7591	Arthur Ostrander	Fox Lake	10519	Russell Collins	Milwaukee
1621	Patrick Davies	Janesville	3032	Orvis Weber	Viroqua	7591	Curt Shawkey	Madison	10519	Walter Gerke	Greenfield
1621	Robert Geisler	Janesville	3153	James Hertel	Chilton	7629	Raymond Paynter	Mineral Point	10549	Kent Anderson	New Glarus
1621	Dan Gibson	Palm Bay, FL	3153	Lyle Wingers	Chilton	7784	Marion Robinson, Jr.	De Pere	10818	John Dean	New Richmond
1621	Robert Monson	Janesville	3319	Lowell Whitehorn	Appleton	7929	Roger Knutson	Amery	11244	Charles Koranda	Wauwaukee
1621	Thomas Stevens	Janesville	3358	Darrell Roecker	Slinger	8021	Thomas Sharratt	Westby	11244	John Oakeson	Stoughton
1621	Carl Stuka	Janesville	3709	Jerry Braudt	Watertown	8068	Raymond Mauritz	Eland	15051	Steve Bogaczyk	Stevens Point
1621	Sherman Tomten	Janesville	5158	Donald Westphal	Jensen Beach, FL	8090	Roger Venden	Columbus	15051	Gordon Deeren	Galesville
1638	James Downing	Merrill	5276	Roger Ames	Prairie du Chien	8216	Terry Ackerman	Marana, AZ	15051	Henry Furlong	Waukesha
1638	Wilhelm Jensen	Oshkosh	5278	Ronald Haase	Berlin	8320	Dennis Bergstrom	Delavan	15051	James Goodrich	Union Grove
1638	Gerald Plamann	Merrill	5373	Paul Ehrlich	Port Washington	8375	Larry Hansen	Salem	15051	Robert Lawrence	Spooner
1865	James LaLonde	Union Grove	5373	Franklin Karrels	Port Washington	8483	Peter Drahn	Arbor Vitae	15051	Floyd Leonard	Oak Creek
1879	Thomas Jung	Fort Atkinson	5470	Clifford Witte	Whitewater	8718	James Warzynski	Westfield	15051	Harold Manley	Arcadia
1908	Arthur Howard	Oshkosh	5612	Robert Cox	Sheboygan	8733	Glen Opichka	Schofield	15051	Jim Muehlenbruch	Belleville
1908	Byron Leinweber	Neenah	5729	Ervin Graf, Jr.	Medford	8834	Allan Musack	Hartford	15051	Norbert Pomeranke	Appleton
1959	Harry Schoolcraft	Black River Falls	5729	Robert Mueller	Cable	9298	Robert Helmich	Dodgeville	15051	Robert Sams	Eagle River
2112	Eugene Ruetten	Sparta	5778	Thomas Herbst	Philpot, KY	9362	Richard Meyer	Sun Prairie	15051	Louis Stan	Magnolia, TX
2113	Lloyd Kolb	Lady Lake, FL	5778	Gerald Schmeiser	Phillips	9424	David Wilkinson	Deerfield	15051	Ralph Vlies, Jr.	Algoma
						9464	Jack Hill	Ladysmith			

Deadline for the May 2025 issue is April 4.

Bringing More of Our Heroes Home

It continues to be an exceptionally busy time for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), with many years of painstaking work coming to fruition in the positive identification of many more of our missing heroes. Included in some of the recent successes are three Wisconsin heroes, two from World War II and one from the Vietnam War.

We salute DPAA for their continued efforts to bring our heroes home to their final resting places. Details on these men are from the DPAA releases and website to date. We will pass along information regarding burial honors and services as soon as it becomes available.

Private First Class David C. Hansen of Milwaukee was accounted for on August 23, 2024. He entered the U.S. Army Air Forces from Wisconsin and served in Headquarters Squadron, 27th Bombardment Group. Stationed in the Philippines at the time of the Japanese invasion of the islands, PFC Hansen was captured in Bataan following the American surrender on April 9, 1942. After the surrender, the Japanese began the forcible transfer of American and Filipino prisoners of war to various prison camps in central Luzon, at the northern end of the Philippines.

The largest of these camps was the notorious Cabanatuan Prison Camp, which at its



PFC David Christian Hansen
6 January 1917
– 28 June 1942

peak, held approximately 8,000 American and Filipino prisoners of war that were captured during and after the Fall of Bataan. Camp records indicated that PFC Hansen died there on June 28, 1942, at the age of 25. He was reportedly buried in Common Grave 407 (CG407). Final burial arrangements in Brookfield, WI are pending.

Pvt. Herbert E. McLaughlin of Shawano was accounted for on December 17, 2024. McLaughlin entered the U.S. Army Air Forces



Pvt. Herbert Elton McLaughlin
7 June 1910
– 7 December 1941

from Wisconsin and served in the Headquarters Squadron, 17th Air Base Group. On December 7, 1941, Japanese military forces conducted a surprise attack on U.S. forces at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, as well as surrounding U.S. military installations, including Hickam Field and Schofield Army Barracks. While the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor was Japan's primary target, enemy planes also had orders to attack the airfields on Oahu.

Located next to Pearl Harbor, Hickam Field was in the direct path of Japanese planes.



Lt. Col. Donald William Downing
17 March 1934
– 5 September 1967

Japanese dive bombers and fighters attacked Hickam Field, destroying planes, the Hawaiian Air Depot's engineering building, barracks and hangers and more. Ninety-one men died at Hickam Field that day. McLaughlin was killed during the attack but the exact circumstances of his loss are unknown, and his remains could not be identified at the time. Herbert E. McLaughlin is the namesake of VFW Post 2723 in Shawano and it is expected that burial arrangements in Shawano are pending this year.

Lt. Col. Donald W. Downing of Columbus was accounted for on December 20, 2024. A 1952 graduate of Janesville High School, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1953 and served in the 557th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 12th Tactical Fighter Wing. In September 1967, he held the rank of Captain. On September 5, he and another aviator made up the crew of an F-4C Phantom II (tail number 63-7547, call sign "Sharkbait 42"), conducting a nighttime armed reconnaissance flight over Quang Binh Province, North Vietnam.

As "Sharkbait 42" and another U.S. plane approached a target, the other crew reported seeing a fireball and losing radio contact with Capt. Downing. Search and rescue efforts began at daylight, but electronic and visual searches didn't find anything. On April 28, 1978, the U.S. Air Force declared Capt. Downing Killed in Action, at the age of 33. He was later posthumously promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. His widow Marian and their four young children lived in Chelmsford, Massachusetts at the time of his death.

After decades of investigation, a Joint Field Activity team located possible material evidence and osseous material at a site in Quang Binh Province in May and June 2024. The laboratory analysis and the totality of the circumstantial evidence available allowed Lt. Col. Downing to be identified from remains recovered from the crash site. Arrangements for burial at Arlington National Cemetery are pending.

WANTED

Photos of Wisconsin Veterans Memorials for the 2026 VFW Dept. Raffle Calendar

REQUIREMENTS: ✓ Full color photos (preferred) ✓ Resolution of AT LEAST 2 MB
 ✓ Electronic files ONLY (.jpg; .jpeg; .png)
 ✓ Original photos, NOT edited or cropped (preferred)
 ✓ Photographer name/credit if applicable
 ✓ Memorials ONLY, WITHOUT people in the photos!
 ✓ Can be entire memorial or just a portion, such as one specific element/monument.
 ✓ Photos from all seasons are encouraged.
 ✓ Multiple views may be sent

PHOTOS MAY BE EMAILED TO WIVFWEDITOR@GMAIL.COM; PLEASE USE 2026 VFW RAFFLE CALENDAR PHOTO IN THE SUBJECT LINE. RECEIPT WILL BE ACKNOWLEDGED BY REPLY EMAIL. PLEASE ALSO INCLUDE THIS INFO:
 Complete address, city, zip code of Memorial; - Date and year the Memorial was completed; - Groups involved (VFW, municipality, other VSOs, etc.); - Any special or unique characteristics or facts about the Memorial; - Contact person if further info needed.

FROM THE HEART

Do you ever wonder why we do what we do? Well, our wonderful Mid-Winter Conference gave us some insight to that. We were fortunate enough to honor our Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy winners and runners-up at the Banquet. We had a wonderful group of young men and women who are our future. They, as well as the Teachers given awards that night, showed us exactly who is keeping patriotism alive in our schools today. A special thank you to the parents for helping to mold your student into a well-rounded individual. I can't wait to see how they do on the National level for Wisconsin.

When I had the opportunity to speak to the VFW side of the house during our Mid-Winter Conference, I spoke to the fact that we are their best advocate. I told them to quit trying to protect us because that doesn't work. Walking the path with the Veteran will enable us to help them get the benefits they need and deserve.

Our Commander Ron Ramos gave us a challenge to keep putting in money for the Joint Project – Journey to Healing Together. Please keep sending your money in. I have heard that the VFW side may be slightly ahead of us, which we know is entirely unusual. Remember we are the best supporters of our Veterans. Who knows what we may see at the Convention in June?

The Year End Reports will once again be in paper form. They are on the state website – vfwauxwi.org – and are also fillable right on your computer (then print), or you can print them first, and fill them in by hand. We tried hard to make them possible to be submitted online, unfortunately, we had too many glitches to make them effective this year. Stay tuned, as online reporting should happen next year. The deadlines

Cheryl Woodards
Department President
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for these reports are extremely important. **Plan ahead - do not put them in the mail on the deadline date.**

As I stated in the last issue, hopefully you have started planning for our Spring nominations and elections. It is extremely important that we keep our Auxiliaries in good health into the future. Sometimes, this may mean a change of Officers. As we age, change seems to become more difficult. Maybe, if we change our way of thinking a bit it won't be so difficult. Start thinking of your current Guard as mentors to the new or changing Guard.

I speak from experience that there were and are times, I would welcome someone else who would step up and into the line of chairs. I know that the Department will be looking for a new Guard and Conductor for the coming year. Like Spring Cleaning, everything looks better and more energized after. However, if you feel you won't find new Officers or people willing to move up, please reach out to us as quickly as you can so we may help you out. **DO NOT SHUT DOWN.**

On a final note, Spring District Meetings are finalized and on the website. Begin thinking of who you will send from your Auxiliary. Each Auxiliary should be sending someone to attend these meetings.

Stay warm, healthy, energized, and moving forward.

HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY to all my Brothers and Sisters of this great organization. We are in the final stretch of the "Honoring Veterans Together" year. We can't stop now, let's figure out a way to mentor each other. We have a wealth of knowledge and experience out there. Share your experiences and knowledge with others. Train and educate members to be future leaders to ensure that our Auxiliaries remain strong and healthy.

Elections are around the corner, **PLEASE step up** and give your seasoned members a break. Blend the past with the present to guarantee our future. If you need help in any way, **PLEASE** give President Cheryl or me a call. Don't wait until it's too late for us to help.

Until next time —

The challenge of leadership is to be strong, but not rude;
be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not bully;
be thoughtful, but not lazy; be humble, but not timid;
be proud, but not arrogant; have humor, but without folly.

- Jim Rohn

American author and motivational speaker

GOD BLESS and let's continue to have a great year for President Cheryl.

Welcome Home, Gregorio!

State JVC/PSC Renee Simpson was honored to attend the Welcome Home ceremony for her son, SGT Gregorio Simpson, at the beginning of February. Gregorio was deployed with the 10th Mountain Division, C CO 1-10 Attach Battalion, Task Force Dragon as an Apache Repairman. They are at the 1-10 AB hanger at Fort Drum, NY where Gregorio is stationed. He is currently a member of Auxiliary 10911 in Camp Douglas.



Linda Moran
Chief-of-Staff
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AUXILIARY

THE POWER OF ONE

Congratulations and thanks to all the hard-working members of our Auxiliaries. 51 of the Department's 101 Auxiliaries reached 100% between July 1, 2024, and February 1, 2025. Certificates were presented at our Mid-Winter Conference to the District Presidents for those Auxiliaries. I am confident that our membership will continue this hard work for the rest of the year. As of March 1, the Department needs only 105 paid members to be 100%. However, only

getting that 100% does not really solve anything, as it does not replace our deceased members. First, we need to grow, not just maintain a status quo. Everyone that has a spouse, parent, child, sibling, grandparent or grandchild that served in any foreign war, insurrection, or expedition is already our "eligible" Auxiliary sister or brother. We just need to ask them to be card carrying sisters and brothers and join us in our "UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR THOSE UNCOMMON HEROES."

Second, we need to develop not only the new members we recruit but also the ones we currently have. Our National organization has provided numerous resources in MALTA, under the Membership tab, to help you and your Auxiliary recognize the efforts of your current members and steps to take to welcome and educate those new members recruited into our family. Retention of our members is as critical as our recruitment of new ones.

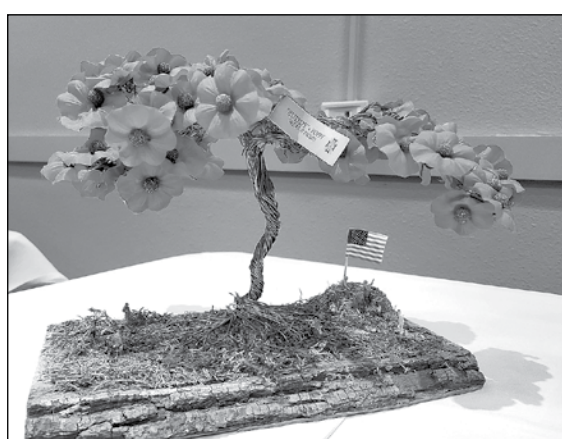
We have three months until the end of the year. Remember **the power of one** – if we all just recruited one new member we would double our membership. Additionally, look at your unpaid list and reach out to those members as to the reason why they have not renewed their membership. Always look for opportunities to render aid as needed or provide opportunities for them to be involved in areas that are meaningful to them. Let them know they are a vital part of our family.

For 100 years the Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary has been serving Veterans, the Military, their families and our communities in honor of the sacrifices and commitments of every man and woman who has served in uniform. We have a proud tradition to uphold for the next 100 years. Let us bring ALL our sisters and brothers into the family. Get your ask on – **THE TIME IS NOW!**

Our Department Membership as of March 1, 2025 – we only need 105 to reach 100% Paid!

Auxiliary	Current Total	Deceased	Paid Total	Prior Total	Current Percent	Paid Percent
Total – Non-District	475	6	481	506	93.87%	95.06
Total – Dist. 2	1082	21	1103	1091	99.18%	101.10%
Total – Dist. 4	283	3	286	281	100.71%	101.78%
Total – Dist. 6	498	12	510	507	98.22%	100.59%
Total – Dist. 7	1238	21	1259	1272	97.33%	98.98%
Total – Dist. 8	813	17	830	857	94.87%	96.85%
Total – Dist. 9	764	15	779	789	96.83%	98.73%
Total – Dist. 10	662	20	682	682	97.07%	100.00%
Total – Dist. 11	445	6	451	455	97.80%	99.12%
WI – At Large	1249	98	1347	1393	89.66%	96.70%
Total – Dept. of WI	7509	219	7728	7833	95.86%	98.66%

Mid-Winter "Buddy"® Poppy Contest Winners



Congratulations to our Mid-Winter Conference "Buddy"® Poppy Contest winners, and thank you to Judges PDP Helen Stearns and Sally Lamers. Winners were – First Place (above left): Auxiliary 2113, De Pere; Second Place (above right): Auxiliary 1038, Chippewa Falls; and Third Place (at left): Auxiliary 10262, Plover.

Photos courtesy of PDP Helen Stearns and PDP Rita Byers.

DRAPING OF THE CHARTER

This listing reflects names as of the most recent reporting of deceased members. While every effort is made to provide accurate and timely information, depending on when the member was reported (or not), it does not necessarily reflect the year of their passing. Treasurers: please remember to report your deceased Sisters and Brothers in a timely fashion so we can honor them and their service with this final tribute.

Aux.	Name	City	Aux.	Name	City
305	Jeanette E. Stabenow*	Eau Claire	8527	Mary M. Tessmer	Athens
305	Marilyn Thoms*	Chippewa Falls	8718	Carol Ann Lullo	Montello
388	Beverly A. Baumann*	Wausau	8718	Margaret V. Schulte	Montello
388	Stella Schumann*	Wausau	8733	Beverly Bemis*	Mosinee
659	Arlene Mauer*	Manitowoc	9677	Donna M. Jauquet	De Pere
659	Marian Skarvan*	Manitowoc	10197	Patricia Blomfelt	Iron River
659	Rosemarie Stumpf*	Irmo, SC	10406	Dorothy E. Fink*	Alma
987	Dorothy E. Schreiner*	Baraboo	10818	Virginia A. Schwan*	Star Prairie
987	Donna Zant*	Baraboo	15051	Elizabeth Arians*	Waterloo
1039	Barbara J. Herman	Menomonie	15051	Priscilla L. Barber*	King
1393	Betty Mapes*	Campbellsport	15051	Patricia J. Bienema*	Buford, GA
1393	Laurel Ann Wiese*†	Horicon	15051	Liliana Biever*	King
1621	Susan Bailey	Janesville	15051	Barbara J. Bjorklund*	Hayward
1638	Darlene T. Hinz*	Stoughton	15051	Barbara Ann Blodgett*	Danbury
1638	Shirley A. Olkives*	Merrill	15051	Carol M. Bolden*	Rhineland
1866	Ruth E. Armbrust	Marshfield	15051	Gertrude Bonczyk*	Cornell
1866	Lucille M. Bauer	Auburndale	15051	Grace Mae Brockmann*	Arena
1866	Rosella Specht*	Marshfield	15051	Doris Kay Cook	Monona
2113	Betty Blumer*	Madison	15051	Lieselotte Curry	S. Milwaukee
2977	Caroline Tinsman	Sheldon	15051	Lola Duberstein	Mosinee
5278	Cheryl A. Boyd*	Ripon	15051	Phyllis Duenkel	West Bend
5278	Sandra L. Soda*	Ripon	15051	Alberta Egvedt	Arbor Vitae
5729	Kathy J. Weiland*	Minden, NV	15051	Emma J. Gassman*	Platteville
5729	Sophia A. Wiles*	Prentice	15051	Angeline Gauger	Sturgeon Bay
5778	Barbara A. Meives*	Phillips	15051	Margaret Greenwood	Two Rivers
6707	Alyce Lulloff	Kiel	15051	Jeanette Gruenewaldt	Mayville
7591	Janet Roessler*	Madison	15051	Madeline Haubrich	Kenosha
7896	Frances Cushman*	Platteville	15051	Marion F. Holtz	New Berlin
8216	Germaine Utter	Madison	15051	Ila Mae Schuster*	Platteville

* DENOTES LIFE MEMBER
† DENOTES PAST DEPT. PRES.

Greetings Brothers and Sisters,
The National Mid-Winter Conference provided a variety of useful information. I was installed as the National District Council Member #11, representing the elite members from Wisconsin and Iowa.

We conducted business, heard from National Guard candidates, and received updates from National Ambassadors on our 11 Veterans', family and community assistance programs. Department Presidents also met with Ambassadors to review their progress.

Clarification on eligibility for membership, based on being awarded the "Purple Heart", requires that the Veteran has served honorably in a foreign conflict or participated in an expedition and received a Campaign Medal.

With the passing of National Director of Administrative Services Janice Criswell,

Kim McWilliams
NDCM #11
815-999-9214
mrsffiiient@gmail.com



the Department of Kansas has developed a scholarship in her honor. The scholarship will be listed under Patriotic Art for \$4,000. This is a great way to honor her memory.

I wish everyone a great finish to the end of the 2024-2025 year and hope to see you at the National Convention in Ohio. Remember to keep your hearts and minds open to new endeavors.

JEANNETTE FRANK AWARD

Each year, the State Convention includes the special recognition of a dedicated Auxiliary member who has serviced the organization for at least 25 consecutive years. It is the **Jeannette Frank Continuous Service Award**. Jeannette served as Department President in 1965-1966 and as National President in 1980-1981. Her leadership exemplified her dedication to the Veterans, the Auxiliary and the community.

The nomination process that takes place in the final quarter of the Program Year is simple. Any member in good standing may nominate another outstanding Auxiliary member who they feel deserves this recognition. Nominees must have served for a minimum of 25 consecutive years. (NOTE: **Past Department Presidents** are **NOT** eligible as they receive a separate Continuous Service Award.)

Nominations for the **2024-2025 Jeannette Frank Continuous Service Award** must be **postmarked by April 10, 2025**. Information and the nomination form were included in the October 2024 and February 2025 Auxiliary mailings. They are also on the Auxiliary State website – vfwauxwi.org – under Programs/Awards – and by request. Please contact me if you need the info or have any questions!

Helen L. Stearns
Awards
Chairman
920-319-2621
hlstearns1021@gmail.com



Our Districts Support the VFW National Home



Some of our Auxiliary Districts have gotten extra creative with the VFW National Home Banks they use to solicit extra donations at their District meetings. Here is just a sampling, photos courtesy of PDP Rita Byers. We know our VFW National Home Trustee #7 Michele Rathke was pleased as punch to include these on her very informative Vendor Table supporting the National Home!



Ways and Means Update

The Department of Wisconsin Ways and Means Committee wants to thank everyone that participated in our raffles at the Mid-Winter Conference in Oshkosh February 14-15.

We raised a total of \$1,667. That included the \$570 from the Quilt Raffle; \$560 from the Basket Raffle; \$453 from 50/50 Raffles; \$34 from the towels and knives and \$50 in donations. (Early ticket sales prior to Mid-Winter also brought in \$200 for the Quilt Raffle.)

The Eagle Quilt created and donated by PDP Mary Brown was won by Dept. Conductor Jennifer Mauritz. Post 2112 QM Tricia Flaig won 2nd prize and Dist. 11 President Rita Byers won 3rd prize.

We're looking forward to some great raffles and items at Dept. Convention in June! *Sherri L. Smith photo.*

2025 DEADLINES!

Young American Creative Patriotic Art and 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Student entries due to Local Auxiliary by March 31, and to Chair Deanna Carothers by April 15

Youth Activities Contests Student entries due to Local Auxiliary by March 31, and to Chair Patty Jansky by April 15

Lillian Campbell Medical Scholarship Applications due to Chair Jennifer Mauritz by April 1

Year End Reports Due to District Presidents by April 1

Jeannette Frank Award Nominations due to Chair Helen Stearns by April 10

Ice Age Trail Walk for Veterans to Cover Trail in a Day



Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars is planning a **monumental event**. This will be a fundraising and awareness walk of the entire Ice Age Trail in one day. That's right ... **one day**. With the trail divided into six areas and then further divided into sections that can be walked in a reasonable day, we plan to walk the entire trail, *collectively*, in one day.

The planning and execution of this event will be extensive and require a lot of personnel. Think of what can be accomplished with this event. The funds raised for Veterans in our State, the recruiting and public awareness footprint, the teamwork from all of our Districts and Posts to make this happen. This could be a landmark event and hopefully, become an annual project. Putting the face of the VFW and partner organizations in the public eye.

To accomplish this task, we will run our program under a modified ICS (Incident Command System) framework. This will allow ease of management of the entire event through different levels of management and responsibility. All positions need a high level of organizational skills, tech know how, and the use of Microsoft Teams.

What we need to recruit in the first stages are the following Command Staff:

- **SAFETY DIRECTOR** – Position needs to communicate well, work as a leader and a team player.
- **PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIRECTOR** – Someone with media contacts and experience desired.
- **OPERATIONS SECTION CHIEF** – Must have the organization and management skills to lead and follow up will all six Divisions that will cover the 120 segments of the trail.
- **LOGISTICS SECTION CHIEF** – Logistics is everything. Responsible for transportation, supplies, communications, facilities, fuel, food and medical personnel.
- **ADMIN/FINANCE SECTION CHIEF** – Responsible for financial management, administrative tasks, and communication with other Section Chiefs.
- **DIVISION STAFF** – Each Division should be staffed with a Safety, Logistics and Admin/Finance lead. That means **six of each** are needed.

If you are interested or would like more details to be on staff for this inaugural event, please email Doug Mitchell at DougM@vfwwi.org.

UW MIA RIP Update

Celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2024, the University of Wisconsin Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project (UW MIA RIP) continues its work to recover missing American military personnel from past global conflicts and educate students and communities about Wisconsin's unaccounted service members. After three successful field operations in Belgium resulting in the recovery of Staff Sergeant Henry Stevens, the UW MIA RIP team returned to the field this past summer.

UW MIA RIP Program Director Mr. Charles Konsitzke; Lead Archaeologist Dr. Gregg Jamison; pre-Doctoral students Alicia Lawson and Ella Axelrod; graduate students Shanna Kang and Lizzy Nist; and volunteers Eric Morefield, Mike MacLaren, Sara Huntsman, Torrey Tiedeman, Dan Joyce, Donald Runaas, and Kristin Schneider, all traveled to Germany, to excavate a site in partnership with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA). Working in farmland, the team used a combination of hand tools and heavy machinery to excavate an aircraft crash site. As with all recovery operations, details of the dig are confidential. The team hopes their work this past summer will bring closure to families of missing American service members.

Over the past six months the UW MIA RIP also hosted several special guests to the "War Room," the UW MIA RIP Suite



The UW MIA RIP Team takes a break to proudly display their flags in front of some very tall corn at the 2024 excavation site in Germany.

located within the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) Biotechnology Center. In November 2024, the team hosted Mr. Alois Kuaso, Deputy Director for Science Research and Consultancy Division at the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery. Mr. Kuaso's visit aimed to foster relations between the UW MIA RIP, Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery, and the University of Papua New Guinea. The visit also served as a coordination meeting for the

UW MIA RIP's upcoming field mission in Papua New Guinea in the summer of 2025. [As noted in the January/February online issue of the NEWS, Cdr. Ramos and SVC Letto also visited in December 2024.]

In addition to conducting field operations and building relations across Wisconsin and the world, the UW MIA RIP expanded its relationship with the student body at the UW-Madison, welcoming a record number of student interns and volunteers since the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with advanc-

ing casework regarding unaccounted for Wisconsinites, the student team developed innovative research methodologies. With the onboarding of six new interns for the spring 2025 semester, the UW MIA RIP student team continues to grow. These operations and growth over the past six months demonstrate the UW MIA RIP's commitment to bringing Wisconsin's and America's unaccounted for home.

Photo and info courtesy of Charles Konsitzke and Kate Alfin.

Bell Tower Memorial Breaks Ground in Pewaukee Kiwanis Village Park

The Bell Tower Memorial (BTM) is a nonprofit organization in Southeastern Wisconsin whose mission is to **Honor, Educate and Remember**. They are currently raising funds to complete their Veteran and Community Memorial in Pewaukee Kiwanis Village Park.

Breaking ground on August 26, 2024, BTM is working with CCI, Corporate Contractors, Inc. of Beloit/Delafield to design and construct the Memorial, which will showcase a flag court representing each branch of the U.S. Military, a beautiful memorial brick walkway leading to benches and a decorative tower featuring a working bell. While Phase I is slated to be finished in Spring of 2025, they would love to complete Phase II, the final phase of the project, at the same time. Phase II consists of the bell structure itself and costs \$50,000. They just need to raise these last funds to complete this project and help further their mission.

In addition to the memorial, BTM coordinates several programs:

- The annual **Veterans Oral History**



A glorious late summer day and awesome golden shovels made for a fantastic groundbreaking for the Bell Tower Memorial in late August 2024.

Project (VOHP) pairs local High School students with local Veterans to be interviewed about their time in the service. These interviews are recorded and sub-

mitted to the Library of Congress as part of their National Veterans Oral History Project. BTM has conducted more than 60 interviews to date.

- The **Veterans in the Classroom Program** schedules local Veterans (many who have participated in the VOHP) to speak with High School history classes about their military service. This is a great way to provide an immersive experience to the students who are most likely studying the conflict the Veteran is speaking about.

- The **Take a Vet to Lunch Program** encourages Veterans who have recently left the service to meet with Veterans currently working in their preferred career path to get advice on how to pursue this career.

Each of these programs offers a glimpse into the lives and stories of those who have served. While they are asking for donations to ensure all these efforts continue, they also want to thank those who have supported their mission to **Honor, Educate and Remember**.

To learn more about the Bell Tower Memorial, follow their progress, purchase a brick, volunteer, or to donate, please visit www.belltowermemorial.org. *Info and photo courtesy of Becky Miller of BTM.*

★ ★ ★ ★ 2024-2025 Red Carpet Awards ★ ★ ★ ★



Congratulations to the 10 Posts and two Districts with the highest membership percentages in each of five Divisions, as reported by December 26, 2024. Mid-Winter attendees are shown with State Commander Ron Ramos and Adjutant General Dan West.

FAR LEFT: Division 1 – 1st: Post 328 SVC Michael Rey and Quartermaster Dennis Schwenn. 100.49%. AT LEFT: Division 1 – 2nd: Post 7591 Cdr. Kerry McAllen. QM Jon Russell could not attend. 96.65%

Mid-Winter photos by Sherri L. Smith.

AT RIGHT: Division 1 – 3rd: Post 1621 Cdr. Mike Zientek and QM Tom Reitz. 95.64%.

FAR RIGHT: Division 2 – 1st: Post 11038 JVC Brent Hibbard and QM James Cairo. 155.55%.



FAR LEFT: Division 2 – 2nd: Post 2115 Cdr. Nate Haumschild and QM Richard Byers. 116.44%.

AT LEFT: Division 2 – 3rd: Post 7534 QM John Wierer. Post Cdr. Bruce Jagodinsky could not attend. 107.35%.

AT RIGHT: Division 4 – 1st: Post 1163 QM Keith Lauth. Post Cdr. Curtis Gruenwald could not attend. 100.00%.

FAR RIGHT: Division 4 – 2nd: Post 2895 Cdr. Bradley Smith and QM Thomas Janczak. 100.00%.



FAR LEFT: Division 4 – 3rd: Post 8338 Cdr. Edward Quinn and QM Gregory Roth. 100.00%.

AT LEFT: Division 5 – 1st: Post 7898 Cdr. John Glomski. Post QM Michael Harris could not attend. 110.00%.



AT RIGHT: District 1 – District Commander Jim Cairo. 97.74%.

FAR RIGHT: District 8 – District Commander Aaron Volling. 96.92%.



Congratulations to our Student Essay Winners

The traditional Mid-Winter Banquet on Saturday evening used a new format to recognize some outstanding achievers. Rather than a separate luncheon to honor students and teachers and then an evening event to recognize our Post and District Red Carpet Award winners, all were included in a festive *Mid-Winter Awards Banquet*. Twelve Red Carpet Awards were presented, as shown on page 11, and three Teachers of the Year were recognized, as shown on page 14.

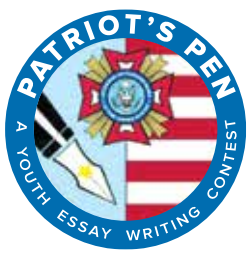


Voice of Democracy First Place, Award Sponsor: VFW Auxiliary Dept. of WI. Grace Kreklow (center), sponsored by Post 1465, with Dept. Nat'l. Scholarships Chair Deanna Carothers.

Adjutant General Dan West; State Cdr. Ron Ramos; Dept. President Cheryl Woodards and Aux. NDCM #11 Kim McWilliams.

We thank all of our sponsors for their support, including our continuing **Silver Sponsor, Festival Foods**. Congratulations to all of our winners. We wish you

all the best in your future endeavors and education!
Mid-Winter Banquet photos by State Photographer Sherri L. Smith.



Also new this year was Sponsorship of the three Patriot's Pen and ten Voice of Democracy awards shown here. Several Posts, Auxiliaries, groups and individuals stepped up to sponsor (and present) the Awards, and Districts were also asked to contribute toward the meals and mileage of their District winners. **Unless otherwise noted, shown with our winners are**



ABOVE LEFT: Voice of Democracy Second Place, Award Sponsor: Post and Aux. 1621, Janesville. Samuel Edel sponsored by Post 2267 was unable to attend; accepting is D3 Cdr. John Scanlan with Post Cdr. Mike Zientek and Aux. member Charlene Cobb.



ABOVE RIGHT: Voice of Democracy Third Place, Award Sponsor: Post 9719, Pulaski. Samantha Shoepke (center) sponsored by Post 10262.

AT RIGHT: Voice of Democracy Fourth Place, Award Sponsor: D9 Riders Group. Laraya Nord (center) sponsored by Post 2204, with Randy Engness and Wayne Guenther.



BELOW LEFT: Voice of Democracy Fifth Place, Award Sponsor: Post and Aux. 1318, Madison. Yuvraj Banerjee (center) sponsored by Post 9537, with Post 1318 SVC Venus Hilgart and QM Gundel Metz.

BELOW RIGHT: Voice of Democracy Runner-Up, Award Sponsor: VFW HQ Staff. Lily Wobschall (center) sponsored by Post 6709, with State QM Tom Heath, AAQM Steve Eisenhauer and Adj. Adam Wallace.





Pen First Place, Award Sponsor: VFW Auxiliary Dept. of WI. Mollie Goral (center) sponsored by Post 6705 with Dept. Nat'l. Scholarships Chair Deanna Carothers.

National Results

- Voice of Democracy Winner Grace Krelow was awarded the \$1,000 Mr. and Mrs. John Biedrzycki and the 2015 Homecoming Committee Scholarship (PA).
- Patriot's Pen Winner Mollie Goral, received the \$500 National President Francisca Guilford and 2015-2016 Auxiliaries Award.
- Katelyn Wright, from Kearney, MO, represented the VFW Department of Missouri, and was awarded the \$2,000 Department of Wisconsin Wally Hogan/Tom Tradewell Commanders-in-Chief Scholarship.



**Katelyn Wright
Kearney, MO**



Pen Second Place, Award Sponsor: Post and Aux. 1621, Janesville. Juliana Peters (center) sponsored by Post 2204, with Post Cdr. Mike Zientek and Aux. member Charlene Cobb.



Pen Third Place, Award Sponsor: Post and Aux. 328, Stoughton. Lena Fyken (center) sponsored by Post 388, with Post SVC Mike Rey.



Voice of Democracy Runner-Up, Award Sponsor: Post and Aux. 1879, Fort Atkinson. Serena Lu (center) sponsored by Post 10568, with Post 1879 Cdr. Archie Hafer and Aux. President Deanna Carothers.



Voice of Democracy Runner-Up, Award Sponsor: MOC Pup Tent 21, Sparta. Elizabeth Curtis (center) sponsored by Post 8021, with MOC 21 Seam Squirrel Wayne Woodman and CCDB Tracy Woodman.



Voice of Democracy Runner-Up, Award Sponsor: Randy and Louise Engness, Rice Lake. Claire Helmila (center) sponsored by Post 7692, with Randy and Louise Engness.



Voice of Democracy Runner Up, Award Sponsor: Post and Aux. 2204, Rice Lake. Lily Hartmann, sponsored by Post 6375 was unable to attend; accepting is Post 6375 Cdr. Scott Weber (center) with Post 2204 Cdr. James Garey and member Randy Engness.

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Teachers of the Year



Recognition of our awesome Teacher of the Year Winners also took place at the Mid-Winter Banquet. Nine Posts submitted 12 entries total in the three grade level categories. Our First Place Winners have been forwarded to VFW National for judging. We wish them well and thank them for their dedication in the classroom!

Thanks to State Photographer Sherri L. Smith for the photos.

Kari Reiser is a 4th Grade Teacher at Fox Prairie Elementary School in Stoughton. She was sponsored by Badger VFW Post 328 in Stoughton. Kari was unable to attend the Banquet, but Post SVC Mike Rey accepted the award on her behalf and the Post will present it to her in the near future.



Kathy Ennis (center) teaches Geography at Einstein Middle School in Appleton and her nomination was submitted by Harvey Pierre VFW Post 2778. In addition to her teaching duties, Kathy is also the Advisor to the Einstein MS Yearbook, and she chairs the annual Veterans Day Program at the school. Joining her with the award are (from left): Adjutant General Dan West; State Cdr. Ron Ramos; Dept. President Cheryl Woodards and NDCM #11 Kim McWilliams.



St. Croix Falls High School Teacher Marley Hoefs (center) was sponsored by United VFW Post 6856 in Milltown. In addition to teaching History/Social Studies, Geography and Economics, she also created a new Veterans Wall of Honor at the school to honor graduates who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Joining her with the award are (from left): Adjutant General Dan West; State Cdr. Ron Ramos; Dept. President Cheryl Woodards and NDCM #11 Kim McWilliams.

★ ★ A PUBLIC INVITATION ★ ★

Dedication of the Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Wall

Noon, Wed. April 30, 2025
Vets & Friends Coffee House, Inc.
A 501c3 Organization
2508 N. Richmond St., Appleton, WI 54911



"A Face for Every Name"

The Wall honors the 1,249 Wisconsin Veterans who died in the Vietnam War.

The dedication marks the 50th year anniversary that ended the war on April 30, 1975.

Jack Voight, President of Vets & Friends Coffee House, Inc.
vetsandfriendscoffeehouse@gmail.com
Major Sponsor... Appleton VFW Post 2778

Connecting the people of Wisconsin with the **USS Wisconsin** and her crews.



Your support is appreciated!
www.USSWisconsinSub.org



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to support the Commissioning and crew of the nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine that will carry our state's name **ON WISCONSIN!**

Ad sponsored by Randy Engess, US Navy and Submarine Veteran



A portion of the Wisconsin Delegation met with Rep. Mark Pocan (center, WI-2) on Tuesday of the Conference. At left are Nat'l. Legislative State Chair Jason Johns, PSC and State Legislative Chair Jordan Tilleson. At right are PSC Mike "Gunner" Furgal, Auxiliary Dept. President Cheryl Woodards and State Adjutant Adam Wallace. *Adam Wallace photo.*

Taking Care of Business



While meeting with Rep. Derrick Van Orden (center, WI-3) on Wednesday, the group witnessed his re-introduction of the VFW-supported TAP Promotion Act to improve the transition process from the military. From left are: Jordan Tilleson; Carla McAndrew; Adam Wallace; Ron Ramos; Cory Geisler; VFW Nat'l. Legislative Director Kristina Keenan; Jason Johns; Ty Letto; and Michele Rathke. *Jason Johns photo.*

Solemn Remembrances



The 2025 Washington Conference had a strong showing from the Department of Wisconsin and was a big success! For the first time, leadership from our Auxiliary family attended meetings alongside us, bringing our total number of "Cheeseheads in D.C." to 18! It was great to have the Auxiliary with us as we met with our House Members and U.S. Senators to inform and advocate on the VFW's pressing Legislative Priorities.

The Conference kicked off on Monday morning with a briefing by the National Legislative Service team, followed by the Wisconsin Delegation meeting on its own to talk through the issues more in depth together and ask any questions. On Tuesday morning, we attended Commander-in-Chief Lipphardt's testimony to a joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees and spent the rest of the day walking the Hill.

On Wednesday we continued meetings on the Hill and concluded the Conference with an evening

ABOVE LEFT: Cdr. Ron Ramos and President Cheryl Woodards are escorted down the steps for their wreath laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. COS Carla McAndrew and SVP Kim McWilliams follow behind. *Adam Wallace photo.*

BOTTOM LEFT: SVC Ty Letto reflects at the grave of 3rd Infantry Division WWII hero Audie Murphy. Ty served in the same Infantry Division during his service in Iraq. *Adam Wallace photo.*

AT RIGHT: A Vietnam Wall volunteer helps SVC Ty Letto complete a rubbing honoring his second cousin, PVT. Roger W. Letto who was KIA in Hua Nghia, South Vietnam on March 14, 1968. He was a member of the HQ-Recon Platoon. His tour began on February 20, 1968. *Ty Letto photo.*

Jason Johns
Nat'l Legislative
Chair
VFW
608-209-0805
fightin4vets
@gmail.com



Legislative Reception where all Members of Congress and their staff were invited to attend. And, as noted on the front page, Representative Derrick Van Orden (R) from Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District was honored as the VFW's National Legislator of the Year. The VFW Department of Wisconsin is very proud of him receiving

this well-earned recognition!
Our top Legislative Priorities for 2025 presented during the week include:

- Unresolved Toxic Exposures
- Alternative PTSD Treatments
- Military Transition
- Claim Sharks
- GI Bill Parity
- Concurrent Receipt (Disability compensation and retirement pay offset)

For more detail and the complete brochure of the 2025 Priority Goals, visit: [VFW National Legislative Service](#).



Cootie Corner

Attention Cooties:
Here's what is new in the Grand of Wisconsin.

We ended 2024 with a Christmas Party for 13 Vets at the Union Grove Housing and Recovery Unit including donations from Outback Steakhouse in Mt. Pleasant and others. We had a lousy time for our Mid-Winter/Testimonial in early January, it was a very "fishy" event!

Next, we had a Breakfast Fundraiser for WVH Union Grove and the Housing and Recovery Unit in mid-February. We have raised \$500 for my Grand Special Project - Healing Waters. There has been bingo at each event across the state.

We are looking forward to the Grand



Hello everyone,
I'm hoping you are all having a great winter.

We had a wonderful turnout at the Mid-Winter Conference. Hope all of you that were able to attend had a wonderful time. We did our bingo at Rock Haven nursing home and the residents had a wonderful time as always. We had our meeting on Saturday morning and our banquet Saturday night - the food was delicious.

Our April Convention is soon approaching. All of the info is in the form on this page. Please see the March and April General Orders for the other things we need to do, including Election and Installation; Year End forms; Delegate forms, etc.

I'm looking forward to seeing you

Paul Kirsch
MOC Grand
Commander
414-803-4633
89pulsar89@gmail.com



Convention in Janesville, April 11-13. We will be at the Baymont by Wyndham and VFW Post 1621. All the info is on this page - call the hotel directly for your room reservation. And send in your registration and meal reservation. Keep 'em smilin' in beds of white!

Paul Kirsch
WI Grand Commander



Rose Jacobson
MOCA Grand
President
608-756-2851
brandyseven@hotmail.com



at the Convention. Congratulations to those celebrating a birthday or anniversary. Get well wishes to all who are ill, and condolences and prayers to those who have lost a loved one. Love to all -

Rose Jacobson
WI Grand President

COOTIE CORNER



Welcoming Paul and Rose

TOP LEFT: 2024-2025 Wisconsin MOC Grand Commander Paul Kirsch and MOCA Grand President Rose Jacobson pose with the cake decorated in their honor at the 2025 Mid-Winter/Testimonial.
Photo from Michele Rathke.

Something Fishy

BOTTOM LEFT: Yes, something about the weekend was definitely "fishy" ...
Photo from Michele Rathke.



Pretty Little Cooties All in a Row

BELOW: Looks like the usual Cootie hijinks and lowjinks ensued over the course of the 2025 Mid-Winter and Testimonial.
Photo from Michele Rathke.



Military Order of the Cootie & Auxiliary MOC/MOCA Grand Convention April 11-13, 2025



Baymont by Wyndham Hotel
616 Midland Rd., Janesville WI 53546
608 - 758 - 4545

Call hotel directly for reservations - mention Military Order of the Cootie
Rooms: \$89 + tax (2 adults)

Deadline for Room Rate: 28 March 2025

Tentative Agenda

Friday, April 11	1300 hrs/1:00 pm	Bingo at Rock Haven Nursing Home 3400 N Cty Rd F
	1500 hrs/3:00 pm	Hospitality Room opens
	1600 hrs to 2000 pm	Fish Fry - 4 to 8 pm (at Post 1621)
Saturday, April 12	0930 hrs /9:30 am	MOC Scratch (at Post 1621) MOCA Meeting (at Post 1621)
	1700 hrs / 5:00 pm	Social Hour (Post)
	1800 hrs / 6:00 pm	Banquet (Post)
Sunday, April 13	0930 hrs / 9:30 am	MOC Scratch (Post) MOCA Meeting (Post)

Note: Scratches/Meetings and Meals at VFW Post 1621, 1015 Center Ave., Janesville, WI 53547

MOC Registration (per person)	_____ @ \$10.00 each	=	_____
Late Registration	_____ @ \$15.00 each	=	_____
MOCA Registration (per person)	_____ @ \$10.00 each	=	_____
Late Registration	_____ @ \$15.00 each	=	_____
Saturday Banquet (Beef Tips, Fried Chicken, etc.)	_____ @ \$30.00 each	=	_____
	Total	=	_____

Name: _____ Pup Tent #: _____
Name: _____ Aux #: _____
Address: _____
City/State/Zip: _____ Phone: _____

MOC Registration & all Banquet Reservations:

Send to: CMDR Paul Kirsch, 1326 Thurston Ave., Racine, WI 53405, 414-803-4633

Payable to: Badger Pup Tent 6

MOCA Registration (MOCA Banquet Reservations are sent to Pup Tent 6 - address above)

Registration sent to: Dolores Sorensen, 2113 Rainbow Dr., Green Bay, WI 54313 920-434-1523

Payable to: Grand of Wisconsin Auxiliary

COOTIE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 11-13 **MOC/MOCA Grand Convention** - Baymont by Wyndham and VFW Post 1621 in Janesville. (Info in this issue and in Cootie e-mailings!)

August 14-17 **106th MOC Supreme Scratch and 64th MOCA Convention** - Wyndham Hotel & Events Center, Columbus, OH (Visit lotcs.org for registration and info.)



MOC Grand Raffle Tickets Are Available NOW

Tickets are \$2 each or 3/\$5
Seven prizes totaling \$1,000
will be drawn on April 12, 2025 at the
WI Grand Convention in Janesville

Contact MOC Raffle Chair Bill Hustad at
608-527-3025 or wfhus1@tds.net for tickets.

Post 9202 Supports Fisher House



Germantown Memorial VFW Post 9202 is proud to support great organizations such as Fisher House. Here, they present a \$2,000 donation to Fisher House – Milwaukee Manager Torrie Hutchison (center). Post members (from left) are: QM John Schaezel; Caleb Balsiger; Wally Kangas; Cdr. Leroy Fry and Chaplain Ray Medley.
Submitted by Post 9202 QM John Schaezel.

Veterans Day Display in Merrill



The Schmitt-Manecke-Donner VFW Post and Auxiliary 1638 set up a beautiful display for Veterans Day at the Associated Bank in Merrill, and that location won the statewide contest for the third year in a row. The display stayed up for the entire month of November. Nice job!
Photos and info courtesy of Denni Radloff of Aux. 1638.

Flag Donation in Waupun



Bentley-Hull VFW Post 6709 Cdr. Frank Mesa (right) presented a large (12 ft. X 8 ft.) American Flag to Waupun Mayor Rohn Bishop (left) to be hung in the gymnasium of the new Waupun Community Center.
Submitted by Post 6709 Adjutant Larry Duer.



Auxiliary 5373 Wins Big



Kudos to the Shipyard in Port Washington for their “No Work” Fundraiser Wheel, supporting donations to local groups. Auxiliary 5373 was a lucky winner for the second time - \$370 back in 2022, and now - \$464 in late 2024. From left are: Sherrie Pals, Kathy Wendt, Shipyard owner Landon Walters and Mary Marchese.

Submitted by D6 President Kathie Lendosky for Aux. 5373.



De Pere VFW Post 2113
8th VFW District of Wisconsin



WE NEED YOUR HELPING HANDS
VETERANS AGAINST HUNGER
FOOD DRIVE

JOIN THE VETERANS OF NORTHEAST WISCONSIN

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

JOIN US IN COLLECTING CANNED AND NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS

What we need: soups, canned vegetables, box potatoes, pastas, sauce, peanut butter, jelly/jam, hot & cold breakfast cereals, canned fruit, canned meat, low sugar items, low salt items, Mac & Cheese, juice boxes, rice, pancake mix and syrup, breakfast bars, canned tuna or chicken, granola, toiletries such as toothbrush, toothpaste, toilet paper, soap, shampoo, plus any kind of pet food, etc.

SATURDAY, MAY 3, 2025 ---- 8 AM UNTIL 10 AM

DROP OFF LOCATION

COTTER FAMILY GATHERING CENTER, 518 MEADOW LANE, WRIGHTSTOWN, WI

ALL DONATIONS GO TO THE WRIGHTSTOWN AREA FOOD PANTRIES

CASH OR CHECK DONATIONS ACCEPTED AT THE DROP OFF LOCATION.
OR - CHECKS MAY BE MADE OUT TO “DE PERE VFW POST 2113” AND MAILED TO:
DE PERE VFW POST 2113, PO BOX 5604, DE PERE, WI 54115-5604

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS, DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN, AND ITS AUXILIARY
2025 WISCONSIN STATE CONVENTION
June 11—June 14, 2025
Madison Marriott West
1313 John Q Hammons Dr, Middleton, WI 53562

VFW Member: _____ Member: _____
Post # _____ Title: _____ Aux #: _____ Title: _____
 \$20.00—\$25 After May 23rd \$15.00—\$20 After May 23rd

Past Post Commanders Lunch **Thursday, June 12th - Noon** **Auxiliary Plated Lunch**
(Open to all Auxiliary)

\$44 Downhome Buffet—Garden Salad with Ranch and Balsamic Vinaigrette, Apple Slaw with Poppy Seed, Fresh Rolls and Sweet Butter, Tender Pot Roast, Grilled Chicken with Herb Jus, Garlic Mashed Potatoes, Baby Carrots, Sautéed Seasonal Vegetables, Caramel Apple Pie, Turtle Cheesecake, Fresh Brewed Iced Tea. **\$36** Grilled Herb Chicken, Herb Jus, Wild Rice, Seasonal Vegetable, Mixed Green Salad: Baby Lettuces, Vegetable Ribbons, and Balsamic Vinaigrette, Warm Rolls and Sweet Butter, Fresh Brewed Iced Tea. **AUX**

\$30 **Women Veterans Plated Breakfast (Open to all Women Veterans) ~ 7:00 am - 8:00 am** **Friday, June 13th** **Auxiliary Club Lunch Noon** **\$44**
French Toast—Grand Marnier Marinated Brioche with Powdered Sugar, Berry Compote, and Wisconsin Maple Syrup. Served with Breakfast Sausage. **Backyard Cookout Buffet—Red Bliss Potato Salad, Creamy Cole Slaw, Grilled Hamburgers and Barbeque Chicken, Sliced Tomato, Onion, Lettuce, Pickles, American Cheese, Condiments, Baked Beans, Watermelon, Salted Caramel Brownies, Fresh Brewed Iced Tea.** **AUX**

\$59 **Convention Banquet ~ Cocktails 5:30 pm, Dinner 6:30 pm** **\$59**
Plated Dinner served with Caesar Salad, Warm Rolls, Door County Cherry Cheesecake, Coffee, Decaf Coffee, and Iced Tea
 (QTY) Roasted Free-Range Airline Chicken Breast, Herb Jus, Whipped Potatoes, Seasonal Vegetable.
 (QTY) Double-Cut Pork Chop, Bourbon and Maple Glaze, Roasted Fingerling Potatoes, Seasonal Vegetables.


Saturday, June 14th, 7:30 am ~ Past Dept. Presidents Breakfast: Yes No **AUX**

VFW Reg: _____ P/C Lunch: _____ Banquet: _____ VFW Subtotal: _____ VFW/AUX Total: _____
Aux Reg: _____ Aux Plated Lunch: _____ Aux Club Lunch: _____ Banquet: _____ P/P Meal: _____ AUX Subtotal: _____

REGISTRATION & RESERVATION POLICY

- ◆ This form accommodates up to 1 VFW Member and 1 Auxiliary Member, for a total of TWO registrations.
- ◆ Use additional forms for more registrations.
- ◆ Cut-off date for meal registrations is May 23, 2025.
- ◆ Registration and payment MUST reach Dept Headquarters by the **May 23rd Deadline** to avoid higher registration fee.
- ◆ **No Refunds.**
- ◆ Late meal reservations, if accepted, are subject to **\$5.00 surcharge per meal.**
- ◆ Special dietary needs? Please let us know in advance.

Make all checks payable to:
VFW DEPT OF WISCONSIN
Earmark: 2025 Convention.
Mail to:
VFW OF WISCONSIN
P.O. BOX 6128
MONONA, WI 53716-0128



Scan the QR Code to register online



Convention Time!

We haven't quite reached the beginning of Spring, but we're nearly at the last quarter of the 2024-2025 Program Year. That means it's time to make your plans to attend the 2025 State Convention, **Wednesday, June 11 through Saturday, June 14 at the Madison Marriott West.**

Remember: You can complete your Registration, Meal Reservations and payment online via credit or debit card or Paypal™! Scan the QR Code on the form at left, or visit vfwwi.org. **There is also a link direct to the Marriott Reservation system!** If you prefer, full size, fillable and printable versions of these forms are also available at the State website.

Whether you are a first-time Convention attendee or a "seasoned pro", the annual gathering at the end of the year is always a great time to catch up with friends old and new and celebrate the successes of our organizations. There is always a good mix of business sessions, awards, solemn ceremonies, training and info – and yes, social time! - to renew and re-energize. And it's always fun to recognize our outstanding performers, both within and outside of our VFW and Auxiliary.

At press time, we found out that **VFW Assistant Adjutant General Brian Walker** will be our VFW National Representative, however, we are still awaiting the confirmation of our Auxiliary National Rep. We'll continue finalizing the Convention Agendas and other activities as well, and follow with much more detailed info in the May/June WI VFW NEWS. In the meanwhile, **MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS!** Hotel deadline is **May 20** and the Registration deadline is **May 23!**

2025 State Convention Hotel Info

Madison Marriott West

1313 John Q Hammons Dr.
Middleton, WI 53562
608-831-2000

Room Rate: \$124 Sgl/Dbf. + Taxes

Call the Marriott directly to make your reservations before May 20, 2025 (or before the block sells out)

Mention VFW Convention

OR – use the QR code/website to do it all in one place!

Other Reminders for Post and Auxiliary Delegates

All Post and Auxiliary members intending to attend the Convention as a **VOTING DELEGATE**, should **PLEASE** make sure these items are completed:

- **ALL required Post or Auxiliary AUDITS** must be filed and up-to-date for Post or Auxiliary Delegates to VOTE.
- **ALL Post or Auxiliary DELEGATES** must be duly elected and those elections duly reported to the **VFW HQ** (online at vfwwi.org, Members Only login) **OR** to the Auxiliary Dept. Secretary Faith Elford. **VFW Delegates** must also pay the required **Delegate Fee**.
- **All Delegates** must register for the Convention as well. (See Registration Form at left.)
- **CREDENTIALS** for Delegates will be supplied at the Convention Registration Table. Make sure you bring your membership card!

The bottom line: **No audits or credentials, NO VOTING!**

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS, DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN, AND ITS AUXILIARY
2025 WISCONSIN STATE CONVENTION
June 11—June 14, 2025
Madison Marriott West
1313 John Q Hammons Dr, Middleton, WI 53562

VENDOR/EXHIBITOR TABLE RESERVATION FORM


\$60 for one 8-foot table for the event – WITHOUT electricity
\$100 for one 8-foot table for the event – WITH electricity
VFW Affiliated Groups - Please call HQ for special rates.
All rentals are based on first come, first-serve
SET-UP: 8:00 AM – Wednesday June 11
TEAR-DOWN: 12:00 NOON – Saturday June 14
DEADLINE FOR TABLE RESERVATIONS IS **MAY 23, 2025**
Pre-payment is appreciated, payment due by set-up time.

EXHIBITOR INFORMATION

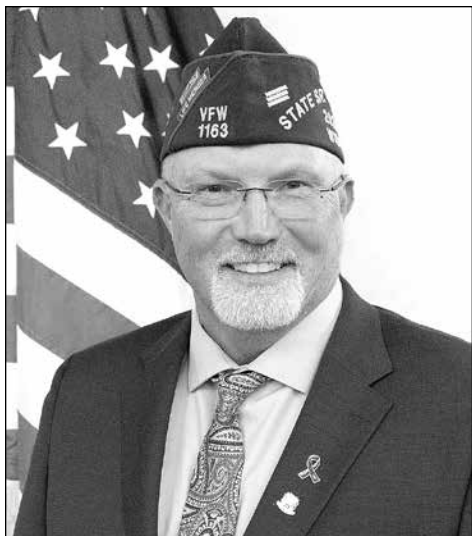
Company/Organization Name: _____
Product or Service being exhibited: _____
Contact Name: _____
Indicate table needed: \$60 (no electricity) \$100 (with electricity)
Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

Payment options

To pay by check
Please make check payable to:
VFW of Wisconsin
Mail to:
VFW OF WISCONSIN
Attn: QM Tom Heath
P.O. BOX 6128
MONONA, WI 53716-0128



Scan QR Code to register and pay online.



Ty Letto

Letto Declares for State Commander

Dear Comrades,
I am humbled and honored to announce my candidacy for State Commander for 2025-2026. This past year as your State SVC, I have solidified my passion for the mission of the VFW and my love for the organization and everything it stands for. My drive to help Veterans, whether community focused, relief programs, legislative, membership, or military honors, is even stronger.

As SVC, I was honored to travel the State visiting Posts and Districts seeing firsthand the fantastic work being done by both the VFW and Auxiliary. I am thoroughly impressed with how you are "Making it Count" by making a difference in the life of a Veteran every day. There is nothing more honorable and rewarding than serving Veterans. I will help empower you to continue that mission.

As a 21-year retired Army Chief Warrant Officer Four, Legal Administrator, my overseas tours included Germany during the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989-1992); and Baghdad, Iraq (2005). A high point was serving as the Legal Administrator for all detainee operations in Task Force 134, Detainee Operations, Multi-National Forces Iraq. There, I was a part of a Leadership Team overseeing 42 Attorneys and Paralegals who were responsible for standing up the Central Criminal Court of Iraq. I am proud to know my service had a hand in the legal tool that tried and sentenced Saddam Hussein.

A Gold Legacy member of Clarence Keske VFW Post 1163 in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, I have served at all levels of the organization, in both elected and appointed positions. I am especially proud of these achievements among others: All-State & Team Captain (2016-17, 2020-21); All-State (2023-24); All-American (2016-17, 2020-21, and 2023-24). Other VFW offices held include Post CDR (7 years); SVC; Trustee; Adjutant; District 2 Surgeon; Adjutant; Community Service Chair; and State Convention Committee. I am also a member of the American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans.

With an MS in Management and a BS in Sociology, I possess over 34 years of leadership and management experience, leading organizations up to 76 staff in size. The highlights include Deputy Chief Information Officer, UW Shared Services; and Director of Student Information Systems, UW System Administration.

What will I accomplish as State Commander? I will implement family focused and family-centric VFW initiatives; provide strong leadership through empowerment, inspiration, and improved communication with membership; and create a Statewide VFW culture of "Make it Count", increasing awareness of how we make a difference every day in the life of a Veteran.

I humbly ask for your support and your vote at the State Convention, and I thank you for what you do every day in the lives of Veterans, because you "Make it Count".



Renee Simpson

Simpson Declares for State Senior Vice Commander

Dear Comrades,
My name is Renee Simpson, and I am a candidate for State Senior Vice Commander, VFW of Wisconsin. I hope this letter finds your VFW Post and membership having a successful year filled with memorable moments. This past year has been filled with a number of amazing activities, projects and successes for our VFW Posts and Auxiliaries. It is clear that our work is vital, especially in times when our loved ones return from deployments, reminding us of the importance of our support network across different levels. I am committed to leveraging our historical expertise to strengthen our impact even further.

Over the years, having served in various capacities at the Post, District, State and National levels, it is a great honor for me to be a member of the State VFW Council of Administration and the National VFW Department Inspector Team currently. The opportunity to assist the VFWs of Wisconsin and around the globe is both meaningful and satisfying.

Our organization's projects and events in Wisconsin are truly remarkable. As we navigate the evolving landscape of Veteran support, it is crucial that we focus on enhancing our assistance to those who rely on us the most – our comrades and their families. Drawing on my experiences with the Wisconsin Army National Guard, I am constantly learning about the evolving needs of our military community, which directly informs how we can better serve within the VFW.

Recruitment and retention are pivotal in shaping the future of both our military and Veteran community. I firmly believe that by uniting our collective knowledge and resources, we can address these challenges effectively and ensure a stronger, more resilient VFW. I am honored to have the opportunity to contribute to this important mission and to work alongside dedicated individuals like yourselves who are committed to making a difference.

I ask for your continued support and the honor of your vote at our State Convention in June.



George Stoeber

Stoeber Declares for State Junior Vice Commander

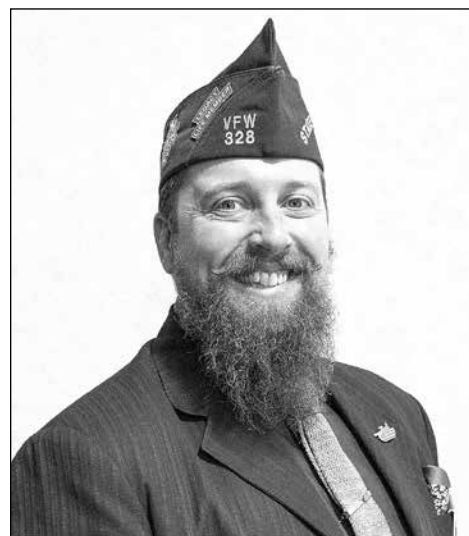
Greetings Comrades,
I am excited to announce my candidacy for State Junior Vice Commander for 2025-2026. My time as your State Judge Advocate, Past State Commander Geisler's

Chief of Staff, as well as the many positions in my Post and District, have given me the confidence to pursue this endeavor.

A Bronze Legacy Life Member of Pleasant Prairie Memorial Post 7308, and a United States Navy Veteran of 24 years, I earned my eligibility for the VFW in the Persian Gulf. Since joining the VFW 12 years ago, I have witnessed, at the Post, District and Department levels, what this organization does for Veterans, and I am honored, that in some small way, I have been a part of something so great.

I feel that I bring strong leadership skills, and a passion for serving the Veterans of Wisconsin. This isn't about me, it is about honoring the legacy of an organization that has done, and continues to do, more for Veterans who have served this great nation. I am extremely proud to be a member of the VFW; proud of my service in the United States Navy; proud to call each of you my Comrade; and excited to continue my service to the Veterans of Wisconsin. I know that I still have much to learn, and if elected, I will do everything I can to represent this Department to the best of my abilities.

For these reasons, I believe that I am very qualified to be next Department of Wisconsin Junior Vice Commander, and I ask for your support and vote at the 2025 State Convention.



Jordan Tilleson

Tilleson Announces for State Chaplain

Comrades,
As a candidate for State Chaplain for the 2025-2026 year, I'd like to share some of my background with you.

I enlisted in the Wisconsin Army National Guard after High School in 2001 as an Infantryman, earning the rank of Sergeant E-5. I enjoyed my time in the Army so much so that attended ROTC while I was in college and was Commissioned as an Armor Officer in 2005. I spent the next 5 years working on the full-time side of the National Guard with 2 tours to Iraq, and lots of travel around the U.S. training other deploying units. After my second tour as a Team Commander, I left for the private sector in 2010, where I've held a variety of management roles in Firefighting, Transportation, Foundry, Manufacturing, and others.

I had some tough years after the military finding my niche in society. The VFW and I connected in 2017 when I came to the Stoughton Post to watch the Army-Navy game. After a small freak-out in the bar wondering why the game wasn't on, the bartender called the Post Cdr. and QM, and I signed up as a Life Member right there. In 2020, I became an active member after being inspired by the Post leadership working to make improvements to the facility while the rest of the world was shut down. They had a clear vision and path that I wanted to be a part of. I've served as Post JVC since then and also as District 2 JVC and SVC. When I was offered my dream role as Chair of the Legislative Committee, I opted to not run for D2 Commander and helped create a succession plan, staying on as a Trustee. These many levels I have worked at have been extremely rewarding and full of adventure.

Through these years after the military, I contribute my religion and positive attitude to my success and overcoming difficult

times. Bringing smiles, hugs, hot dogs, and flamboyant clothing to VFW functions has brought much joy to this organization and to myself. If elected, it is my intent to continue building on the esprit de corps of the VFW. I want to maximize the Chaplain's Corner of the State VFW website to include inspiring enthusiasm, devotion, and a strong regard for the honor of the VFW, and spend time traveling to Posts to help share that enthusiasm and love that I have found here! I have the drive and desire to continue to make the VFW the greatest Veterans Service Organization in Wisconsin.

I look forward to the prospect of serving you as your 2025-2026 Wisconsin VFW State Chaplain, and I thank you in advance for your support.



Nicholas Webster

Webster Announces for State Judge Advocate

Greetings Comrades,
It is my pleasure to announce my candidacy for the Department Judge Advocate. I want to thank those who have supported me when I expressed interest in this position. Now I ask for the department's support as I run for this position.

I gained my membership to the VFW in 2005 after returning from my first deployment to Iraq. I have been an All-State and All-American Quartermaster twice. I currently have a Silver Legacy membership with Post 10911 out of Camp Douglas. Away from my time with the VFW I work as a supervisor for the Toro Corporation. I live in Tomah with my beautiful wife Angela and my son Jackson, who many of you have met at the different VFW events.

I believe that I have the experience to handle this position. I have been on the State By-Laws Committee for the past three years and the National By-Laws Committee for the past two years. In that position I have done a deep dive into the Manual of Procedures, By-Laws, and Rituals. Having in-depth discussions of the impacts of proposed changes. This has given me the opportunity to gain an understanding of this book that I would not have had if not placed on those Committees.

These positions have taught me many lessons but the biggest is that we should always do what is in the best interests of the VFW. If I'm elected to this position, I will do my best to always do what is in the best interests of the VFW. I'm passionate about all the good that this organization does, and I want to ensure that we continue to the work that we do for Veterans and our community. Thank you for your time and I ask that you support my candidacy at our Convention.

REGISTER NOW
for
State Convention!
See page 18

A Special Birthday for Bob Jacob



WWII Veteran Bob Jacob (right) celebrated his 101st birthday at a fun gathering at Gross-Yaksh VFW Post 6498 where he is a Life Member. (That other “youngster” is PSC Tom Lemmer, celebrating his “29th” again.)

Drafted into the U.S. Army in February 1943, Bob was on Iwo Jima at the time the American Flag was raised on that famous site, and he was there when Hiroshima was bombed and the war ended. Leaving Iwo Jima on Christmas Eve 1945, Bob was officially and honorably discharged on January 22, 1946. He was invited to travel to Arlington, VA for the 80th Anniversary of the Battle for Iwo Jima this past February, but unfortunately was unable to attend due to some health concerns.

We thank you for your service then and now Bob, and wish you many more Happy Birthdays! Thanks to Bill Rheingans, Jean Miller and Becky Miller for info and photo.

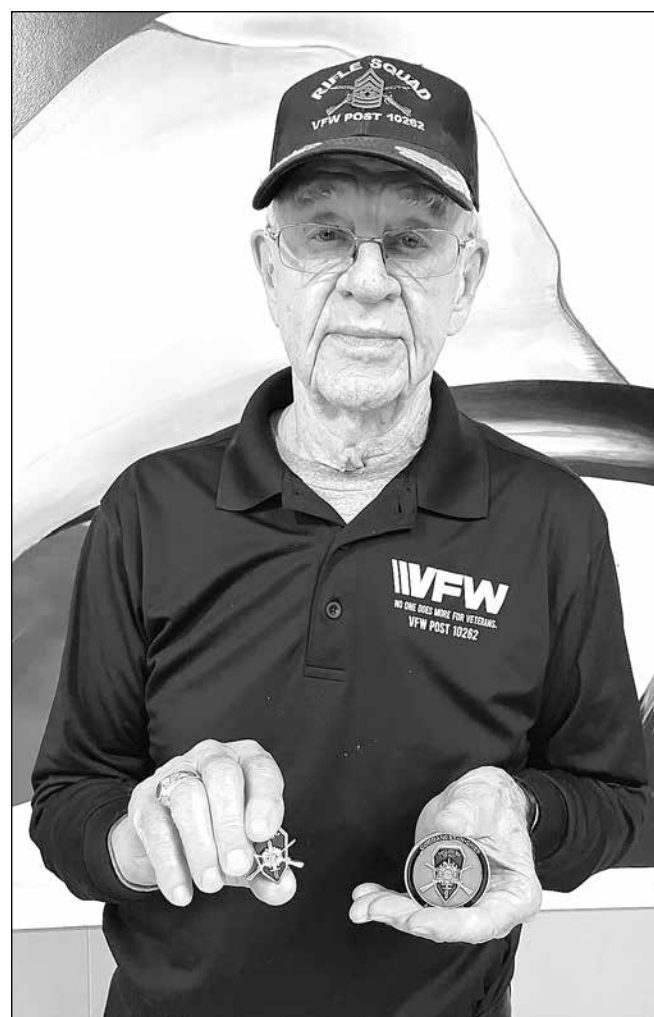
Celebrating the VFW National Home



Wisconsin was well-represented at the VFW National Home 100th Anniversary Gala in early February in Lansing, MI. And we DO “clean up” well! Here in their party finery are (Front row, l to r): Wayne Woodman; Charlene Cobb; Tracy Woodman. Second row (l to r): Michele Rathke; Carla McAndrew; Cheryl Woodards. Third row (l to r): Faith Elford; Robbie Elford; Aimee Viljevac; Arnold Viljevac; Lisa Patterson; Ty Letto. Thanks to Carla McAndrew and Tracy Woodman.

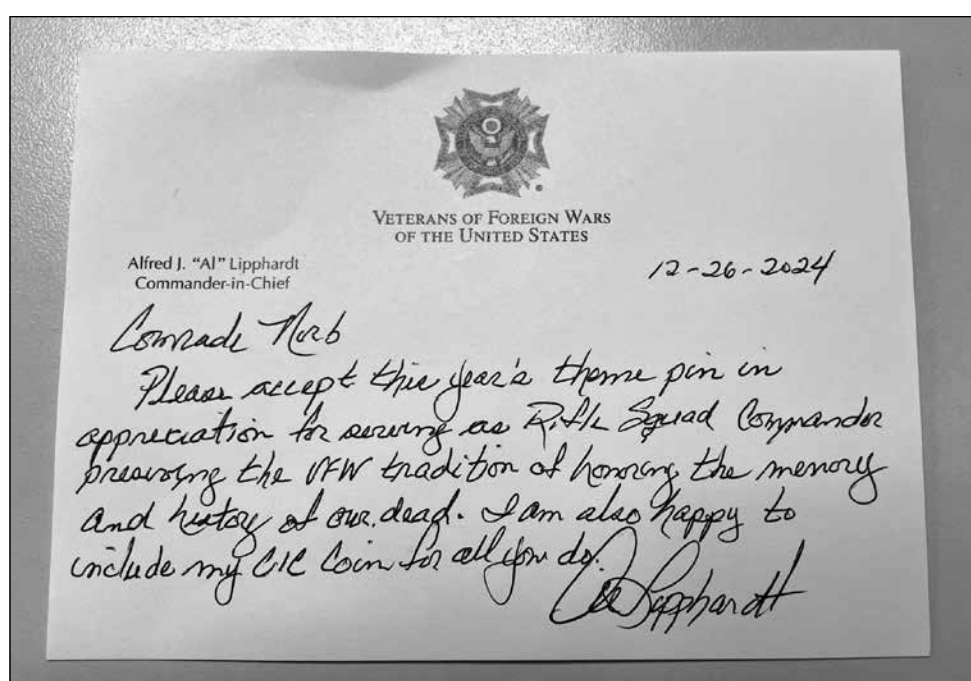


ABOVE: Post 10262 Rifle Squad members received their pins at the January Post meeting. Front (from left): Carl Coffman (Aux.); Don Mugridge (VFW); Debbie Manthey (Aux.); Mike Zynda (VFW). Back row (from left): Post members Perry Engel; John Herek; Guy Jones; Fred Gburek; Robin Schuh; David Verhage; Tony Carpenter; Tim Bubla; Casey Gagas (Aux.); Post Cdr. Barbara McCloy. On ZOOM screen: Post member Larry Kinyon wintering in AZ. AT RIGHT: Unfortunately, Norb Strasser couldn't be present at the meeting, but he received his items soon after.



The Tale of the C-in-C Pins

Sometimes, all it takes is to just ASK. After Debbie Manthey of Auxiliary 10262 in Plover saw C-in-C Al Lipphardt's pin, she wanted to get one for each of her fellow Rifle Squad members. A little “Googling” and she finds the Chief's phone number, dials it, and lo and behold, he answered. She explained the request, conveyed info about the Squad, and sure enough, right after New Year's Day, a package arrives with hand-written, individually addressed envelopes for each member, personally shipped by our C-in-C. Awesome and amazing service and caring. A GREAT story Debbie, thanks for sharing it with us, along with the photos.



LEFT: Chief Lipphardt's handwritten note to Rifle Squad Commander Norb Strasser. RIGHT: Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt's distinctive pin.



BITS & PIECES

A compendium of things new and noteworthy ...

- Earlier this year, we received word that the new owner of the former **VFW Post 1230 in Sheboygan** was intending to remove the many Veterans' Tribute Bricks at the property. **A heartfelt salute** to the Historic Sheboygan Masonic Lodge Foundation, Inc., which has decided that the bricks will remain after all!

- **Congratulations to Dave Mikulski of Winiecki VFW Post 9677**, who was honored at the United Patriotic Society Volunteer Awards Banquet, for his exceptional service tending the nameless and forgotten gravesites at Potters Field in NE Green Bay.

- A new exhibit, **Traditions: Stories of Service to Country and Community** opens on March 14 at the **Wisconsin Veterans Museum**, 30 W. Mifflin St. in Madison. The exhibit highlights stories of Wisconsin Veterans' service in uniform and their contributions after service to our nation and state. It runs through July 6, 2025. *Check it out!*

- **MEANWHILE**, while some of us have been paying homage to our inner "winter sloth", the Department's most athletic and fit (in the Editor's humble opinion) Past State Commander **Cory Geisler** has announced his intentions to train for the Kettle Moraine 100 Miler held in June. He describes it as his "bucket list race".

- **HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY TO THE VFW NATIONAL HOME!** By all accounts, the Birthday Gala held on February 8 in Lansing, MI was an elegant, well-attended event. Watch future issues and our websites, etc. for details on other great celebrations. *If your Post or Auxiliary has not donated to the National Home regularly, perhaps this special birthday year would be a great way to start a new tradition!*

EVENTS AND DEADLINES

- April 4** **Deadline** for May/June 2025 Wisconsin VFW News (**Printed and mailed**)
- April 5** **District 6 Meeting – Auxiliary ONLY!** – 10:00 am (Regis. 9:00 am) – VFW Post 1908, 109 Rosalia St., Oshkosh, WI 54901
Rep: SVP McWilliams
- April 5** **District 10 Meeting – VFW and Auxiliary!** – **VFW meets at 9:00 am, Auxiliary at 9:30 am** – Hayward Veterans Center, 10534 S. Main St., Hayward, WI 54843
Reps: PSC Rathke and Pres. Woodards
- April 5** **District 11 Meeting – VFW and Auxiliary!** – 9:00 am (Regis. 8:00 am) – **VFW @ The Log Cabin**, N4697 Hwy. 162, Bangor, WI 54614 – **Auxiliary @ John Bosshard Memorial Library**, 1720 Henry Johns Blvd., Bangor, WI 54614 – **Lunch at Log Cabin follows meetings.**
Reps: JVC Simpson and JVP Cobb
- April 11-13** **MOC/MOCA Grand Convention** – Baymont by Wyndham and VFW Post 1621, Janesville, WI. (See registration and info in the Cootie Corner.)
- April 12** **District 4 Meeting – Auxiliary ONLY!** – 9:00 am (Regis. 8:30 am) – Brass Key Restaurant, 4952 W. Forest Home Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53219
Rep: JVP Cobb
- April 19** **District 1 Meeting – VFW ONLY!** – 9:30 am (Regis. 8:30 am) – VFW Post 11279 – at AL Post 544, 989 Legion Dr., Twin Lakes, WI 53181
Rep: JA Stoeber
- April 19** **District 6 Meeting – VFW ONLY!** – 10:00 am (Regis. 9:30 am) – VFW Post 2925, 420 N. Wisconsin St., Berlin, WI 54923
Rep: Cdr. Ramos
- April 22** **Veterans Day at the Capitol** – Madison, WI – See **Save the Date flyer** elsewhere in this issue.
- April 26** **District 2 Meeting – VFW and Auxiliary!** – 9:30 am (Regis. 8:30 am) – VFW Post 5716, 17980 W. Beloit Rd., New Berlin, WI 53146
Reps: JA Stoeber and Chaplain Southworth
- April 26** **District 9 Meeting – VFW and Auxiliary!** – 9:30 am (Regis. 8:30 am) – Bloomer Area Veterans Center, 1206 Veterans Memorial Dr., Bloomer, WI 54724
Reps: Cdr. Ramos and Pres. Woodards
- April 27** **District 3 Meeting – VFW ONLY!** – 10:00 am (Regis. 9:00 am) – VFW Post 7345 – at AL Post 97, 322 N. Douglas St., Dodgeville, WI 53533
Rep: JA Stoeber
- April 30** **Deadline** for Post Audits to VFW State Headquarters
Deadline for Post Election Reports entered in OMS (vfw.org)
Deadline for Post Delegate Reports and Dues – online at vfwwi.org
- May 3** **District 7 Meeting – VFW and Auxiliary!** – 10:00 am (Regis. 9:00 am) – VFW Post 1638, 601 Johnson St., Merrill, WI 54452
Reps: SVC Letto and SVP McWilliams
- May 3** **District 8 Meeting – VFW and Auxiliary!** – **SCHEDULE:**
8:00 – 10:30 am – Veterans Against Hunger Food Drive (D8 VFW Day of Service Project)
10:30 am – Registration for lunch and meetings
11:00 am – Lunch
12:00 noon – VFW and Auxiliary Meetings
LOCATION for all events: Cotter Family Gathering Center, 518 Meadow Lane, Wrightstown, WI 54180
Reps: Cdr. Ramos and JVP Cobb
- May 10** **District 4 Meeting – VFW ONLY!** – VFW Post 8482 – 1:00 PM (Regis. 12:30 pm) – at AL Post 434, 9327 S. Shepard Ave., Oak Creek, WI 53154
Rep: SVC Letto
- June 11-14** **VFW/VFWA Dept. of Wisconsin State Conventions** – Madison Marriott West, 1313 John Q. Hammons Dr., Middleton, WI 53562 (See page 3 Planning Calendar for Hotel reservation info, and page 18 for Meals and Registration info.)

FROM THE EDITOR

"So, don't dwell on the award that slipped away; remember that your Post and its members are winners in the hearts of Veterans and the community. Your actions speak louder than any trophy, and your impact is immeasurable."

~ SVC Mary Ann Christopherson,
March/April 2024 NEWS

Marla Morgan

Editor



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Just like "Springing Forward" with our clocks this month, we suddenly find ourselves approaching the final quarter of the 2024-2025 Program Year. It's time to check the final deadlines in our remaining programs and as always, take some time to ensure your Post and Auxiliary have sent in those **nominations, applications, donations** and **registrations** to the proper places, by the time they are required.

Congratulations to our Red Carpet Winners, Student Essay Winners and Teachers of the Year, honored at this year's Mid-Winter Banquet. We are grateful for **your actions** and **your impact**, on your communities, schools and our Department.

As is customary in March, this issue is full of info about upcoming events like the **VFW Fourth Annual Day of Service on May 3** and of course, our **State Convention slated for June 11-14**. District meetings start in early April – all Posts and Auxiliaries should send at least one representative. And **"Save the Date" for Veterans Day at the WI Capitol on April 22**. We need as many "hands on deck" as possible to ensure our Legislators keep Veterans' issues front and center!

There are also many wonderful examples of great projects at our Posts and Auxiliaries. No one holds a "patent" on these ideas: tailor them to your situation and make them happen in your community! **"Your actions speak louder than any trophy, and your impact is immeasurable."**

Please continue to **Inform, Inspire, Invite** as we finish the year strong and successful. And keep up those membership recruitment efforts! It's not over until June 30. They can't join if you don't **ASK!**

"Journey to Healing Together" • "Honoring Veterans Together"

Greetings, VFW members!

I'm guessing that many of you have thought to yourselves, how is it that time seems to move faster and faster the older you get? I had that thought the other day when I realized that I'm beginning my third year as the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. The other thought I had was how lucky I am to have such committed partners like the VFW. I look forward to meeting with your Department Commander, Ron Ramos, and his leadership team as we continue to discuss how to address Veterans' needs and meet our collective obligation to serve them.

This year, I want to continue to prioritize fostering the relationships WDVA has with our partners. I am always looking for ways to improve our partnerships. That includes more visits with Veteran groups across the state. The more interaction we have, the better we can help each other. Strength comes from having an open and cooperative exchange of ideas with the people who are on the front lines serving Veterans in communities big and small. When we work together, we can create lasting, successful outcomes for our state's Veterans and their families.

I am already planning visits for the coming year and look forward to meeting with all 72 County and 11 Tribal Veterans service offices again. WDVA depends heavily on our CVSOs and TVSOs – they are primary partners in the vital network, helping us connect Veterans with their eligible benefits, filing claims, and registering Veterans for VA Healthcare. They also work closely with WDVA's Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP) and our Veterans Housing

and Recovery Program (VHRP) to connect struggling Veterans with timely assistance, including employment help, substance use, and mental health treatment, and for those facing homelessness.

This new year marks the beginning of the Commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum is a key player in the effort to highlight the role of Wisconsin in that event and the impact of its people on the nation's past, present, and future. 2025 will see several events celebrating the establishment of our Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, which came into existence even before we were a country. The celebration will continue into 2026 as we all commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Please stay tuned to our social media channels and the Museum's America250WI website for more information at <https://wisvetmuseum.com/america250/>.

As always, I am grateful for the VFW's commitment and work in supporting Veterans across Wisconsin!

James Bond

Secretary,
Wisconsin
Department of
Veterans Affairs



PROGRAM DEADLINES

Finishing strong in 2025, here are upcoming Program Deadlines to be aware of so your participants don't miss out! Please see the 2024-2025 State Commander's Program Book for the necessary forms and/or links. (The Book is in the MEMBERS ONLY SECTION on the VFW State Website.)

- March 30** **VFW Member of the Year** nominations due. Submit **online** in Members Only section of the State website, vfwwi.org.
- April 30** **DEADLINE for applications** for the Frank N. Brown Scholarship. **CLICK HERE** for the program info and application.
- May 2** **All-State Packets** due from Post to State HQ.
- May 15** **DEADLINE for applications** for WI VFW Foundation Grants.

Questions? Call State HQ at 608-221-5276!

Aux. 1038 Valentines for Veterans



Another fun and creative project at Chippewa Auxiliary 1038 in Chippewa Falls. Their holiday gifts to Veterans at the WVH Chippewa Falls and the Veterans Housing and Recovery Project are always right on the money. And as you can “see”, the members have a great time together putting their creative energy to good use. Great job! Submitted by Aux. 1038 President Patty Jansky.



Tina from Mission Barbecue, located at 6930 75th Street, Kenosha, receives a plaque of appreciation for their support during Post 7308’s Veterans Day “Buddy”® Poppy Drive. The restaurant provided lunch for all the members participating that day. From left: Larry Rugg; Joel Eaves; Tina and John McCoy.

Post 7308 Thanks Supporters

Some nice info and photos from Pleasant Prairie VFW Post 7308 Chief-of-Staff Randy Strickland: “VFW Post 7308 receives a lot of assistance from our community businesses, to support our fellow Veterans. Recently, our Commander John McCoy, SVC Larry Rugg and JVC Joel Eaves visited two of those vendors to show our appreciation! We are proud to be associated with such giving businesses in our community.” Thanks also to Larry Rugg and Joel Eaves for photo assistance!

Children’s Christmas Thank You



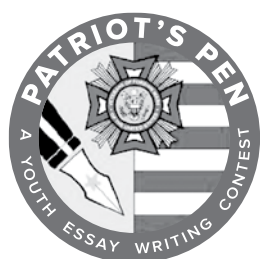
VFW of Wisconsin VAVS Rep. Rod Fifield (left) and VFWA of Wisconsin Rep. Audrey Dotzauer (right) presented \$6,000 worth of Walmart gift cards (\$50 each) to Priscilla Larson of Voluntary Services at Oscar G. Johnson VAMC in Iron Mountain, MI, just in time for Children’s Christmas 2024.

Thank you to all who donated to the 2024 “Children’s Christmas” at Oscar G. Johnson VA and its Branch Clinics. You helped make the holidays MUCH happier for many Veterans and their families!

VFW Auxiliary, Dept. of Wisconsin • VFW Auxiliary, Dept. of Michigan • VFW Aux., District 8 • VFW and Aux. 2063, Crivitz • VFW and Aux. 2113, De Pere • VFW and Aux. 2119, Mountain • VFW 2778, Appleton • VFW 2895, Cudahy • VFW Aux. 3319, Kaukauna • VFW Aux. 6705, Denmark • VFW and Aux. 7534, Village Of Howard • VFW Aux. 7692, Freedom • VFW Aux. 9202, Germantown Memorial • VFW Aux. 9677, Bellevue • VFW Aux. 10544, Heart Of The Valley • VFW 1039, Menomonie • MOC and MOCA, Grand of Wisconsin • MOCA Pup Tent #9, Janesville • MOC and MOCA Pup Tent #23, Green Bay • MOC Pup Tent #38, Plainfield • DAV Of Wisconsin • Military Order of The Purple Heart Chapter 1879, Iron Mountain, MI • Netzel-Zenz American Legion Post 413, Crivitz • VFW Brown County Council • Marla Morgan and Bill Knudson • Nancy Malewiski • John Sarns



Another plaque of appreciation was presented to John Waldkirch, the Store Director of the Meijer Grocery located at 7701 Green Bay Road, Kenosha. Meijer presented the Post with a donation of \$1,000, ear-marked for the Tiny Homes at the Veterans Outreach Program in Racine. From left: John McCoy; Mr. Waldkirch; Larry Rugg and Joel Eaves.



**Post/Auxiliary and District
Voice and Pen Winners
will be published in the
May/June WI VFW NEWS!**

**Thank you to these Wisconsin Posts
for their support of the VFW NEWS.**

For more information on Post Booster Ads, contact Editor Marla J. Morgan at: wivfweditor@gmail.com.

**PEWAUKEE
MEMORIAL
POST 9537**

Meetings — Third Wed. of the month
Post open 4:00-8:00 p.m., Mon-Wed-Fri.
HOME OF THE STATE HONOR GUARD
The greatest little Post in the State

11/21

**GROSS-YAKSH
Post 6498**

Home Post of
Past Cdrs-in-Chief
Walter G. Hogan
and the late
Tommy “T” Tradewell

11/21

Raffle Calendar Winners

Date	Ticket	Name	City	Prize	Date	Ticket	Name	City	Prize
Jan. 3	11035	B. Richison	Cornell	\$400	Feb. 7	537	J. Bennin	Baraboo	\$300
	9595	T. Bruette	Manitowoc	\$50		12028	W. Umrath	Reedsburg	\$50
	5646	K. Newberg	Manitowoc	\$50		6549	B. Golabowski	Menomonee Falls	\$50
Jan. 10	10862	S. Mahowald	St. Paul, MN	\$50	5518	J. Wildes	Broomfield, CO	\$50	
	6041	D. Conatty	West Allis	\$50	6511	B. Raddemann	Hartford	\$50	
	1991	I. Metz	Fitchburg	\$50	3537	J. Vichich	Franklin	\$50	
	1061	T. Bauer	Potosi	\$50	10044	D. Hansen	Wrightstown	\$50	
	8359	F. Billings	Menasha	\$50	Feb. 14	12014	R. LaCrosse	Oxford	\$50
	14059	D. Schroeder	Berlin	\$50		11958	S. Rochen	Westby	\$50
	10005	M. Bielinski	Denmark	\$50		12947	J. Leege	Oxford	\$50
Jan. 17	12919	D. Reese	Berlin	\$50		12561	N. Green	La Farge	\$50
	2902	R. Nellis	Plainville	\$50	11319	E. Lipinski	Thorp	\$50	
	2434	R. Stollings	Salem	\$50	8083	D. Dobson	Windsor	\$50	
	3932	K. Haen	Sturgeon Bay	\$50	2048	B. Kortte	Oregon	\$50	
	10968	B. Hamm	Menomonie	\$50	Feb. 21	3191	M. Tomashek	Beaver Dam	\$50
	12593	A. Sutherland	La Farge	\$50		2900	C. Wilson	Sussex	\$50
9590	L. Hansen	Two Rivers	\$50	814		C. Edgin	Dodgeville	\$50	
Jan. 24	11259	L. Rochocki	Chetek	\$50		6980	J. Hazen	Sheboygan Falls	\$50
	12390	VFW Post 7908	Holmen	\$50	5876	J. Kramer	Crandon	\$50	
	3520	D. Parent	Milwaukee	\$50	11315	M. Borgeson	Withee	\$50	
	504	K. Shafer	Brownsville	\$50	1663	D. Showers	Beloit	\$50	
	7519	M. Trussoni	Marshfield	\$50	Feb. 28	11084	T. Constant	Lakeville, MN	\$50
	8772	C. Welch	Appleton	\$50		3214	D. Turk	Fall River	\$50
10722	D. Stephens	Barron	\$50	14670		K. Fritz	Plymouth	\$50	
Jan. 31	3974	N. Vogel	Waukesha	\$50		7303	P. Pierce	Mosinee	\$50
	9951	C. Smith	Mountain	\$50		9942	C. Gardon	Peshtigo	\$50
	9483	K. Lemberger	Two Rivers	\$50		7167	S. Hever	Grapevine, TX	\$50
	1231	R. Shroades	De Forest	\$50	10054	S. Vercauteren	Greenleaf	\$50	
	3340	T. Moan	Portage	\$50					
	12023	D. Finkenstein	Baraboo	\$50					
1601	T. McGinnis	Cudahy	\$50						

Raffle Winners are posted on the VFW State Website – vfwwi.org – after the Friday drawings at State HQ. Click on NEWS, then VFW RAFFLE CALENDAR NEWS.

THE BOOK CORNER

Lady First to Soldier First

by Arlene Banks

The Women's Army Corps (WAC) opened doors for women to serve in the Army. Arlene Banks grew up in an era where girls were groomed to be housewives and homemakers, but the domestic realm was not a place where she wanted to be in her life. Her narrative spans 20 years, from her enlistment into the WAC to her surprising and unexpected transition into the All-Volunteer Army. Her assignments kept her in field environments for the bulk of her career and the challenges to juggle military and domestic duties for her marriage and children became commonplace.



Arlene Banks

In *Lady First to Soldier First*, Arlene pours her heart out as she illustrates her experiences serving as a WAC and a soldier; her battle for women's empowerment and her self-discovery. As she puts it, "Every woman of that period has their own set of experiences as pioneers for what has evolved into today's Army and women's roles. I am sure many women had a smooth transition while many others, maybe, not so much."

But don't just take her word for it:

"Oh my goodness!! I loved it—so many things I never knew about you and your family!!! I'm sooooo proud to know you—though I always have been!!! I want to donate my book to the Edgerton Public Library, in

hopes that they add it to their collection!!! You are a hero—you should also be a star!!!"

JoAnne Franzene
Retired Educator

"For those of you who do not know Arlene Banks, she is a Life Member of the [Wisconsin] VFW. Spent many years in various roles within our Wisconsin organization. She has shared a number of stories with me of her time in the Army. Should be a great read about how she started as

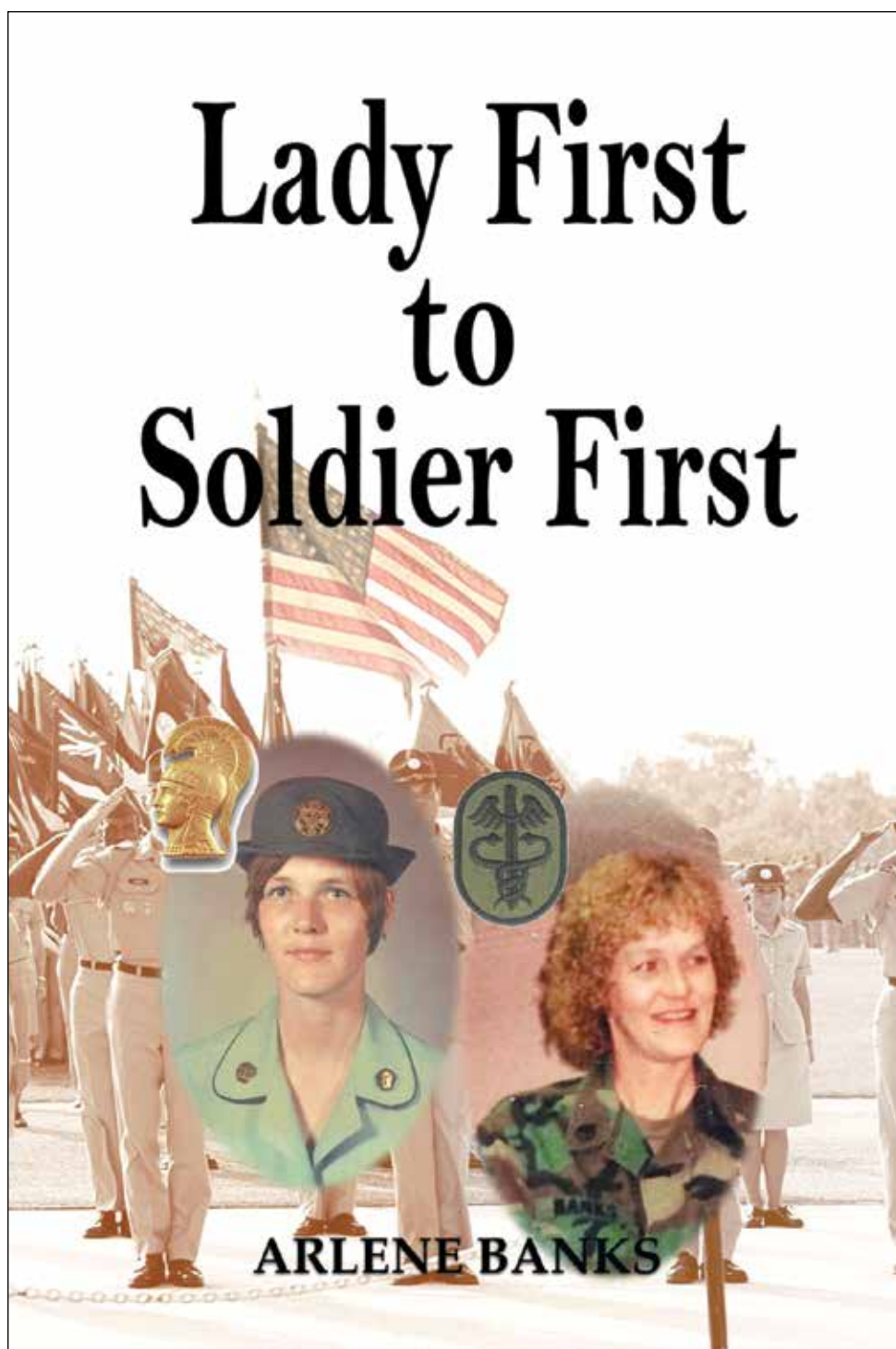
a WAC and woke up to being in the Army one day. Cannot wait to place my order tonight."

Renee Lockington-Simpson, WI PSC
(and like a second daughter)

"Finished it in a day. All I can say is wow! Every page was so interesting! You being dumped from WAC into full on Army, and not being able to get to E7 level, even being over qualified for that. And good for Earl being able to get you in Germany to be with him and the kids. Wow what you went through."

Michelle Blumer, Niece

Arlene Banks and her husband of 35+ years, Earl D. Banks, U.S. Army CSM (Ret.) live in Lampasas, TX. Both are VFW Dept. of Wisconsin Life Members, holding numerous offices and appointments at Post, District, Department and National levels. Arlene served several terms as Dept. Surgeon among other offices, while Earl



served as State Commander in 2005-2006, and later National Chief-of-Staff for our 2009-2010 Commander-in-Chief Tommy "T" Tradewell. Since their move to warmer climates in the South, we miss their visits

"home" to Wisconsin, but fortunately they are just an email or phone call away!

Lady First to Soldier First is available for purchase at either [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or [Barnesandnoble.com](https://www.barnesandnoble.com).

THE BOOK CORNER REPRISE

Editor's note: This BOOK CORNER is reprinted from our January/February 2025 online issue. As noted then, *Pea Shooter Pilot* reads like an easy conversation with a dear friend you have known for years. Veterans of any conflict or branch of service will enjoy it immensely!

Pea Shooter Pilot

by John Robert "Jim" Donohue

"I was a World War II fighter pilot. The bomber pilots called us "pea shooter pilots," we called them "truck drivers". But it was all in good fun, because we had a lot of respect for one another. I didn't envy them having to fly straight and level through flak and enemy fighters and they were always glad to have a fighter escort. We couldn't do anything about the flak, but we could take care of the enemy fighters."



John Robert "Jim" Donohue

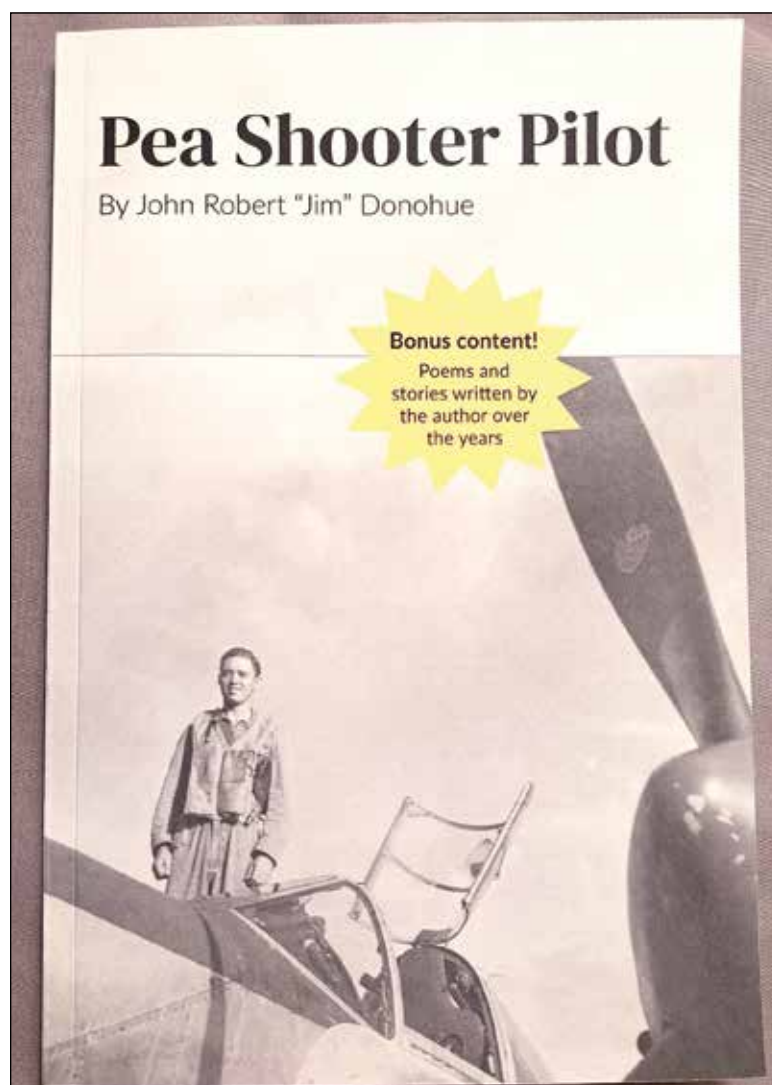
PARK FALLS, Wisconsin—Our country's history is full of stories of everyday people doing extraordinary things. One of those stories is detailed in a newly released memoir, *Pea Shooter Pilot*. Author John Robert Donohue, "Jim" to his family and friends, details his experience in the Army Air Corps during World War II, including his efforts to enter the aviation cadet program, flight training, and flying P-38s in com-

the Army and shipped out before the end of the year. "I didn't think about going to war," Donohue wrote. "This was a great adventure, and I was ready for whatever happened."

After basic training in Missouri, the Army sent Donohue crisscrossing the U.S., first to Ohio, then to Seattle and Alaska, and eventually to California where he attended flight school. After completing flight training, he was assigned to fighter squadrons in Hawaii and the Pacific Islands. He returned to Northern Wisconsin in December 1945 after the war ended.

A retired machinist living in Park Falls, Donohue began working on *Pea Shooter Pilot* in his mid-80s and shortly after finished the book and shared it with his family and friends. He recently self-published the book on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), where it is available as a paperback and an e-book.

In addition to his World War II memoir, Donohue has also writ-



ten a collection of poems that is included in *Pea Shooter Pilot*. It includes poems inspired by his time in the military, the people in

his life, and the occasion of his birthday. Thank you for your service "Jim" – we wish you many more Christmas birthdays!



Mid-Winter Memories



FAR LEFT: Dept. of WI VFW Riders Group Vice President Doug Mauritz (with check) presented the Group's donation of \$900 to WI Unmet Needs to (from left) QM Tom Heath; Cdr. Ron Ramos and Unmet Needs Past Chairman Bruce Sorensen.

AT LEFT: VFW State Officers and our Adjutant General look on as Commander Ron Ramos leads a Saturday business session.



ABOVE LEFT: Auxiliary National District Council Member #11 Kim McWilliams (also WI Sr. VP) addresses the VFW as Cdr. Ron Ramos and Dept. President Cheryl Woodards (standing) and other Officers look on. ABOVE RIGHT: Checks are good; big checks are better, especially \$5,000 from the Dept. Auxiliary to support the WI VFW NEWS. Thank you! AT LEFT: Dept. of Minnesota VFW Commander David Staehlin conducted a very informative and active session of Parliamentary Jeopardy on Saturday afternoon. BELOW LEFT: VFW Auxiliary President Cheryl Woodards addresses the Saturday evening Awards Banquet. BELOW RIGHT: State Honor Guard CSM John "Trapper" Schultz, PSC (left) welcomes newest members Katherine Pinnow from Post 10911 and Daryl Booth from Post 2113 to their first event. Both are great additions to the Honor Guard.



Photos by State Photographer Sherri L. Smith



ABOVE LEFT: The Awards Banquet Emcees State Legislative Chair Jordan Tilleson and PDP/Dept. Secretary Faith Elford not only looked amazing, they did an excellent job keeping the evening on track and fun. ABOVE RIGHT: Many thanks to Quin Fitzpatrick (far left) and other Festival Foods attendees for your company's Presenting Sponsorship of our Mid-Winter Awards. AT RIGHT: National Representative VFW Adjutant General Dan West appears to await an answer on something from Cdr. Ramos during a Saturday session.