



VFW WISCONSIN



NEWS 2025



VOL. 43 NO. 1

MAKE IT COUNT

JULY/AUGUST 2025



MAKE IT COUNT, EVERY DAY

Another well-executed Joint Installation followed the conclusion of the successful 2025 State Conventions in Middleton, and the VFW and Auxiliary teams under the leadership of State Commander Ty Letto of Beaver Dam and Department President Kim McWilliams of Salem, are off to a busy start of the new year. Commander Letto has selected **"Make it Count"** as his theme, while President McWilliams chose

"We Rise by Lifting Others".

Serving as Installing Officers were Past State Commander Mike Eggleston for the VFW, and Past State Commander John Schultz for the Auxiliary. Friends and family of both new leaders joined a large group of members to witness the ceremonies, which were followed by the first Council of Administration meetings for both organizations. Additional detailed plans for the year

were presented at the customary Program Kickoff weekend in early July.

We congratulate our new leadership and wish them, and their teams, a strong and productive year. Look for additional photos from the 2025 Conventions and Installation in the Flickr Album at: [2025 STATE CONVENTION](#) on the VFW State website. *Many thanks to State Photographer Sherri Smith for her excellent photos!*



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SVC/NEWS Chairman
Renee Simpson
svc@vfwwi.org

SUPPORT THE WISCONSIN VFW NEWS

Regular and accessible communication to our membership is essential to achieving our goal to **"MAKE IT COUNT"**, and we take our mission very seriously. How can YOU support the WI VFW NEWS?

- Donate generously to the 2025 WI VFW NEWS Sweepstakes in this issue.
- Ensure that the newly-instituted 50¢ per member VFW NEWS fee due from each Post is transmitted to State HQ in a timely fashion.

- Help our team solicit sponsorships and advertising support from Veteran-friendly entities in your area. This one's a little more complex in details – contact SVC/NEWS Chairman Renee Simpson if you are interested in helping! (svc@vfwwi.org)

**WITH YOUR HELP, WE CAN ALL STAY
ON THE SAME PAGE THIS YEAR!
PLEASE TAKE ACTION TODAY!**



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A Sacred Duty: Leading the VFW Department of Wisconsin

When I assumed command of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Department of Wisconsin on June 14, it was not to fill merely a command position, it was a profound honor and solemn responsibility. Our Department is comprised of 23,303 dedicated VFW members and 7,844 Auxiliary members across the state. This sacred role stands at the intersection of legacy, service, and leadership.

Our organization is built on the foundation of selfless service. Its members have worn the uniform, faced combat, and returned home with a mission to continue serving; this time, their fellow Veterans, their communities, and the nation they once defended abroad. Leading such a distinguished organization requires more than vision; it demands servant leadership, which I discussed in my last newspaper article, grounded in humility, accountability, and a relentless commitment to others.

From the smallest towns to our largest cities in Wisconsin, as VFW members, each of you performs acts of extraordinary service every single day. Whether it's organizing Honor Guards at military funerals, leading Community Service projects, mentoring youth through Scholarship programs and Patriotic education, or advocating for Veteran benefits at the state and national levels, your presence is felt, and your impact is lasting.

Our great Auxiliary, composed of spouses and family members supporting Veterans, plays a vital and equally inspiring role. Their contributions, ranging from Hospital support and Community Outreach to fundraising for Veterans in need, reflect the strength and compassion that fuel this organization's continued growth and relevance. They are greatly needed and deeply appreciated.

Ty Letto
State Commander

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Together, this powerful team of 31,147 men and women exemplify servant leadership. You don't seek recognition; you seek results. Your goal is not to be praised, but to make a difference. Your leadership is evident not in titles but in action; in the way you step up when others step back, the way you give without asking, and the way you honor the fallen by supporting the living.

As I humbly serve as your VFW Commander, I do so standing on the shoulders of giants; giants like each and every one of you. I will carry forward a legacy of patriotism, compassion, and unwavering duty. Together, we will continue to uphold the values that define the Veterans of Foreign Wars: service before self, honor above all, and a steadfast commitment to one another. It is my highest honor to lead alongside each of you.

In the year ahead, you and I will walk this path together; assuming good intent, with respect for one another, with gratitude for the past, resolve in the present, and faith in the future of our great organization and nation. We are more than a fraternal organization; we are a family united by service, and I am deeply honored to lead it.

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!

Greeting Comrades,
I am honored and humbled, to have been elected as your Junior Vice Commander, and I pledge to serve the Veterans and their families of Wisconsin to the best of my abilities. My commitment is to support our newly installed State Commander Ty Letto, and to work diligently to ensure his objectives for our Department are promoted and achieved.

Ty's vision for this Department and his recognition of the important work that all of you do every day positively impact the lives of Veterans. He understands that our strength comes from our ability to serve our fellow Veterans, their families, and the communities that have supported us throughout our lives.

During this program year, we will continue our efforts to get long overdue Veteran legislation passed; ensure our Veterans Service Office is fully staffed and funded to assist Veterans navigating the complexities of benefits, resources, and services available to them; ensure our membership remains strong so that our voices are heard from Madison to Washington, D.C.; and to promote Commander Letto's and Auxiliary President McWilliams' Joint Special Project "Campfire for Courage", which will support The Highground's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Retreats for Wisconsin Veterans and their families.

You are the backbone of this organization, and we are here to support you, so if you have any questions or comments, do not hesitate to reach out to me. As Commander Letto has stated: "Remember to **'Make it Count'** in everything that you do, because you make a difference in the life of a Veteran every day!"

George Stoeber
State Jr. Vice
Commander
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"The HQ Dispatch"

Comrades,

What an amazing 2024-2025 year we had! Thank you all for contributing to the successes we all can share and be proud of. It was great to see so many of you in Middleton for Convention, and we look forward to seeing many of you throughout



ADJ Adam Wallace
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QM Tom Heath
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AAQM Steve Eisenhauer
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this next year as we support Commander Letto in accomplishing his goals and vision.

QM Heath would like to thank you for electing him for his 12th term as State QM, and ADJ Wallace and AAQM Eisenhauer would like to thank Commander Letto for their appointments to their 4th terms of office. The HQ Team is energized and focused on supporting Commander Letto and all of Wisconsin's members and Posts throughout the 2025-2026 term!

We'd like to remind Posts, especially the QMs and Trustees, of some upcoming deadlines. The June audit, which

covers the period of April 1 – June 30, is due to HQ by July 31. For those unaware, we have a new email address for Audits which is **audits@vfwwi.org** but if you get it emailed to anyone at HQ, we'll be sure to route it accordingly. Shortly after that QM Bonds, which are required by the Bylaws, are due no later than August 31. The new form for QM bonding can be found in the **LOGIN/Member's Only section** at **vfwwi.org**.

While you're in the State website, we encourage all members to check out the **Quartermaster's Checklist**, which give you a perfect road map of mandatory items and due dates throughout the program year. And of course, we have **Commander Letto's 2025-2026 Program Book**, which gives you all the information you need for this year's Programs and of course the requirements for All-State. Start now if you want to go for this coveted achievement!

An update on a couple items that passed via vote on the Convention floor. One is a 50¢ per member Newspaper per capita dues. This 50¢ will be calculated based on the membership numbers of Posts as of June 30, 2025, and will be due to HQ by March 1, 2026. Posts are encouraged to get this paid as early as possible. Additionally, the Convention passed a \$3.00 increase in Department yearly annual dues. **This only affects annual dues fees from annual members.** If you have any questions about either of these, reach out to HQ.

Throughout the year, your Districts and the Department will be providing various types of training, either in person or online. We highly encourage members with all levels of experience to engage in these sessions. The VFW evolves across all spectrums, so the rules or processes you learned 10 or 20 years ago, may be out of date. You're never too old or experienced to learn something new!

A New Year in the Making

Thank you, Comrades, Sisters, and Brothers, for an amazing VFW year focused on our "Journey to Healing Together" and "Honoring Veterans Together". It is truly an honor to serve as your State Sr. Vice Commander and I thank you for your continued backing. Wisconsin is fortunate to have such dedicated and supportive VFW and Auxiliary members who selflessly give of themselves. Without your efforts and the backing of our supporters, we could not achieve the level of success we enjoy.

The other day, while leaving work, I noticed a woman cleaning the headstone of one of our fallen heroes at the small Base cemetery. It struck me profoundly. I watched as she gently poured water over the stone, removing years of grime while being shaded by the trees from the blazing sun. There was no fanfare – just a simple act of appreciation in honor of those who served, resting peacefully on the hillside. This moment made me reflect on the mission and vision of the VFW.

Our Mission: To foster camaraderie among United States Veterans of overseas conflicts. To serve our Veterans, the military, and our communities. To advocate on behalf of all Veterans.

Our Vision: Ensure that Veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country.

As we enter the year of "Make it Count" and "We Rise by Lifting Others," we will face both challenges and successes. Each challenge can strengthen us, and we can overcome them with the support of one another. Our organizations face a crucial balancing act: expanding our reach to serve more Veterans and their families while simultaneously ensuring they receive the benefits they've earned. The VFW and Auxiliary can achieve both by regularly communicating with members about benefit updates, deadlines, and available resources. Strengthening our partnerships with government agencies and other organizations to leverage their resources and expertise in streamlining benefit access.

Know that we are a family that is here to support one another whether it be for revitalizing our Post and Auxiliaries, or working for the next level of achievement. Our success is not measured by one, but all working together.

Renee L. Simpson
State Sr. Vice
Commander

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Congratulations to our 2025 All-Americans!
Department of Wisconsin

District 1, District 4, and District 8

Post 328, Stoughton
Post 1163, Beaver Dam
Post 1318, Madison - Cranefield
Post 1621, Janesville
Post 2063, Crivitz
Post 2113, De Pere
Post 2115, Hudson

Post 2260, Oconomowoc
Post 2373, Williams Bay
Post 2534, Wisconsin Rapids
Post 2778, Appleton
Post 3358, Slinger
Post 3635, Florence
Post 5716, New Berlin

Post 6279, Adams
Post 6377, Sussex
Post 7308, Pleasant Prairie
Post 7444, Armstrong Creek
Post 7534, Village of Howard
Post 7591, Madison - Day
Post 7692, Freedom

Post 8338, Barron
Post 10187, Edgar
Post 10519, Greendale
Post 10549, New Glarus
Post 10911, Camp Douglas
Post 11038, Rochester

STATE OFFICERS

Greetings Fellow Wisconsinites,
Welcome to the new Command year under the leadership of Ty Letto as your State Commander. It is an honor to be Ty's and your Chief-of-Staff. Ty and I have been "trading seats" at the Post level for 10 years, taking our Post 1163 to All-State and All-American honors many times.

A little about me: I grew up in Beaver Dam and graduated from Beaver Dam High School, joining the U.S. Marine Corps on June 6, 1989. After completing Basic Training in San Diego and Marine Combat Training at Camp Pendleton, California, I went on to Marine Aircraft Life Support System Technician (Parachute Rigger) School in Lakehurst, New Jersey. I then joined the Fleet Marine Force via Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 164, Marine Air Group 16, 3rd Marine Air Wing, Marine Corps Air Station Tustin, California, in the Flight Equipment Shop.

My first deployment was with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) aboard the USS Okinawa LPH 3, June 1990 – April 1991. During that deployment, the 13th MEU(SOC) took part in all three phases of the 1st Gulf War: Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and Desert Saber. My second deployment was with the 15th MEU(SOC) aboard the USS Tripoli LPH 10, September 1992 – April 1993. We spearheaded Operation Restore Hope in the Country of Somalia.

Since being Honorably Discharged from active service on June 6, 1994, with the rank of Corporal, I have been teaching scuba diving for the past 30 years as a Master Scuba Diver Trainer. Working in numerous construction trades, most notably as an HVAC Technician, I am currently the Director of Facilities at Ripon College, overseeing the Maintenance, Housekeeping, and Grounds Departments.

A Bronze Legacy Life Member of Post 1163 in Beaver Dam, I have served in many offices at all levels, including District 2 Commander in 2019-2021; National Aide-de-Camp 2023-2024; and currently, Post and District Quartermaster as well as a Member of the State Honor Guard. My lovely wife Cindy and I have two daughters, Emily (27) and Chloe (17), and one grandchild, Lilly (2), who also reside in Beaver Dam.

I want to congratulate all the new members of the Leadership Teams throughout the State, from Post to District to Department. I am here to help you through the many new ideas and programs under Ty's year, among them "Recruit Wisconsinbly", "Make it Count", and the Special Project, "Campfire for Courage" at The Highground in Neillsville. [See Chairman Nate Haumschild's article on the Special Project on page 13.]

Commanders and Quartermasters: The Commander's Program Book is in the LOGIN/Members Only section of the state website, vfwwi.org. PLEASE open up the Program Book and share with your Post, and let's start out the year on the right track. Also, if you're interested in ordering Ty's Commander Shirt, the form is also in that section.

Please reach out by phone or email if you have any questions.

Keith Lauth
Chief-of-Staff
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**Wisconsin Veterans
of Foreign Wars News**



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JULY/AUGUST 2025

Comrades,

I am deeply honored and grateful to have been elected as your Judge Advocate. The support I received during my candidacy was truly humbling, and I thank each of you who placed your trust in me. As we look ahead to the coming year, I am committed to making decisions and offering guidance that reflect the best interests of our VFW and its proud legacy.

For those who were unable to attend the recent State Convention, I'd like to take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Nick Webster, and I currently reside in Tomah with my wonderful wife Angela and our son Jackson. I work as a supervisor at the Toro Corporation, and when I'm not on the job or tackling projects at home, I enjoy spending time in nature—especially hiking.

My military journey spans 23 years of service as an Infantryman in the Wisconsin National Guard. I earned my VFW eligibility through deployments to Iraq from 2004–2005 and again from 2009–2010. I officially joined the VFW after returning home in 2005 and found my true connection with Post 7232 in Eau Claire. Since then, I've had the honor of serving as both an All-American and All-State Quartermaster,

Nick Webster
Judge Advocate

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twice. Since 7232, I have established a new home with Post 10911 in Camp Douglas, where I serve as the Senior Vice Commander.

Currently, I'm also serving my first term as Quartermaster for District 11. Over the past three years, I've been a member of the State Bylaws Committee, and for the past two years, I've contributed to the National Bylaws Committee. These roles have given me a deep understanding of our governing documents and a passion for ensuring they serve all members effectively. I bring that same dedication to my role as Judge Advocate.

I look forward to serving you and our organization with integrity and enthusiasm.

Comrades:

A new year began for Post, District, and State Officers on June 14 when our new Department Commander, Ty Letto, was installed at our 104th Department Convention in Middleton, WI. I have been appointed by Commander Letto as State Inspector this year and I thank him for the chance to be part of his 2025-2026 team. One welcome addition this year is the appointment of a Deputy State Inspector. Camerron Wettren, Quartermaster at Post 2534 in Wisconsin Rapids, has been chosen to fill this role. This new position will help distribute Inspector tasks and prepare someone new for future consideration as Inspector.

We likely have a lot of new Commanders and Quartermasters this year, and the June Quarterly Audit needs to be completed and submitted to State Headquarters by the end of July. This report requires the signature of the Commander and Trustees **elected for the 2025-2026 term**. I appeal to outgoing Quartermasters to offer assistance to "boot camp" Quartermasters so their first tasks are completed correctly and on time.

Besides the June Audit, a couple of more tasks also need to be tackled as well. The Quartermaster Bond must be submitted to Headquarters to ensure it is in force by August 30. If your Post doesn't use the VFW for bonding, make sure you verify when your current Bond expires and renew it accordingly. When private bonding is used, a copy must be submitted to Dept. HQ.

By the time you read this, Post Quartermasters will again have access to the VFW Online Membership System (OMS). Access to and familiarity with the OMS is necessary to be an effective QM. In addition, the Troop ID (ID.Me) password used by the VFW is also accepted by the IRS to enter the site to file a 990 form.

And this leads to filing the IRS 990 form – essentially your Post's or District's non-profit income tax form. If your fiscal year ends June 30, I advise submitting the report as soon as possible. If your fiscal year ends December 31, make sure the 990 has been filed, and if it has not been filed, do so immediately.

Remember, your State Inspectors and Headquarters Staff can help you with most issues you may have difficulty completing. A great outline for Quartermasters to follow is the Quartermaster Checklist Guide (Appendix B), found in the new Commander's Program Book on pages 33-35 and online at vfwwi.org in the LOGIN/Members Only section.

Make your efforts as Quartermaster "count" toward improving the overall operation of your Post or District as well as your service to Veterans and the community.

Leroy Jansky
State Inspector

VFW
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inspector@vfwwi.org



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OR

Scan the QR Code to the right.



SCAN ME

Wisconsin VFW News Production Schedule

Sept. 2025 Issue Vol. 43, No. 2 Deadline to Editor: August 18, 2025

Nov. 2025 Issue Vol. 43, No. 3 Deadline to Editor: October 6, 2025

Jan. 2026 Issue Vol. 43, No. 4 Deadline to Editor: December 5, 2025

Mid-Winter Conference • February 6-7, 2026

March 2026 Issue Vol. 43, No. 5 Deadline to Editor: February 9, 2026

May 2026 Issue Vol. 43, No. 6 Deadline to Editor: April 6, 2026

Department Convention • June 10-13, 2026

Wisconsin VFW News

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I.S.S.N. #1061-4591 U.S.P.S. #007787
Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars

Planning for Upcoming Meetings

- **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 • \$112 + taxes
1000 Imperial Ave., Rothschild, WI 54474 • 715-355-1111
- **2026-2027 Program Kickoff/Council of Administration**
Fri.-Sat., July 10-11, 2026
Hotel Mead • \$92/\$102 + taxes
451 E. Grand Ave., Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494 • 715-423-1500
- **2027 Department Mid-Winter Conference**
Fri.-Sat., February 5-6, 2027
Hilton Appleton Paper Valley • \$129 + taxes
333 W. College Ave., Appleton, WI 54911 • 920-733-8000
- **2027 Department Convention**
Wed.-Sat., June 9-12, 2027
Madison Marriott West • \$132 + taxes
1313 John Q Hammons Dr., Middleton, WI 53562 • 608-831-2000

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

LET'S "MAKE IT COUNT"

Comrades,
It is with deep gratitude and humility that I step into the role of your Wisconsin VFW State Chaplain. I want to sincerely thank each of you for your votes and the confidence you've placed in me. It is an honor to serve in this sacred position, and I am committed to making a meaningful difference in the lives of our members and Veterans across the state.

This command year's theme, "Make it Count," resonates deeply with me—not just as a slogan, but as a call to action for every one of us. We know what it means to answer a higher call. We've done it in uniform, and we must continue to do it now in service to our fellow Veterans. Whether it's reaching out to a comrade who hasn't renewed their membership or advocating at The Square/Capitol Hill for Veteran legislation, every action matters. Every voice counts.

We especially need to "Make it Count" when it comes to membership and Legislative activities. We grow stronger when we grow together. Bring a buddy to a meeting. Invite that isolated Veteran down the street. Share your story and listen to theirs. And when the call comes to write, call, or visit your elected officials—answer it. We've earned the right to be heard, and we must never stop speaking up for those who can't.

Jordan Tilleson
State Chaplain
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This command year also brings a solemn moment of reflection. We mourn the loss of our comrade William "Knoot" Knudson, whose dedication to Veterans and this organization will never be forgotten. Knoot was a shining example of what it means to live a life of service and compassion. We celebrate his legacy by carrying forward his passion and energy for helping others.

Let us also embrace the power of esprit de corps—the spirit that binds us together not just as Veterans, but as family. This year, expect more hugs, handshakes, flashy suits, and yes—even more hot dogs. Why? Because joy is contagious. Connection is healing. Love—true, family love—is what makes this organization a home, not just a hall.

I'm here to enhance your spirit and help you connect with those Veterans who need your care and attention. Together, we'll "Make it Count", with faith, purpose, and camaraderie.

TIME FOR PATRIOT'S PEN
AND VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

August is the time to meet with the schools in your area for Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen entries. The theme for both programs is identical this year: **"How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?"**.

Don't have a school in your area? Reach out to the community. The best way you can do this is to go on the ScholarsApp and download a poster, which will have a QR code, and post it at your local stores/gas stations. That way the students that qualify (Grades 6-8 for Patriot's Pen and High School for Voice of Democracy), can just scan the QR code and access the application to submit their entry to the Post.

If you have not used the ScholarsApp or don't know how to use the ScholarsAPP, then we can help you. Please contact Scholarships Co-Chair Ron Ramos at **ronr@vfwwi.org** and he will send you an email to let you into the application, so that you can print a flyer. If you do use the QR code, then you will receive the entries through that program. Or we can download a flyer for your Post and email it and you can then Post it. If you do not wish to use the ScholarsApp, you can cover up the QR code with the Point of Contact for your Post.

NOTE: As always, brochures/applications for both of these Student Scholarship Programs are available for download/printing at: **VFW YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS, OR for purchase at: VFW STORE PROGRAMS.**

Deadline for both programs is midnight, **October 31, 2025**. Entries must be received at the Post by that time and date. Posts must have their winners to the District by November 30, and Districts must submit their winner to the State Chair NLT December 20, 2025.

Gundel Metz
Pen/Voice
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STATE OFFICERS

Greetings Comrades!
I am humbled and honored to once again serve as your State Surgeon—many thanks to Commander Ty Letto for appointing me to this position once again. Most of you know me, but let me re-introduce myself to those who may not.

I have served in the Wisconsin Army National Guard as a combat medic since June 2004 and am currently a Senior Medical Instructor at the Wisconsin Military Academy in Fort McCoy. I earned my eligibility for the VFW by serving a tour in Taji, Iraq, from 2009 to 2010. While there, I worked in a hospital on a detainment facility that provided medical care for both coalition forces and Iraqi detainees. Later this year, after over 21 years of service, I plan to retire from the National Guard.

Joining the Wisconsin VFW shortly after my tour, I didn't become overly involved until I transferred my membership to Post 7232 in Eau Claire in late 2018. While there, I served in multiple leadership roles, culminating in my command year from 2021 to 2022. I was the Post's first female Commander as well as the first All-State and All-American Commander.

At the District level I have served as District 9 Adjutant and Junior Vice Commander. My Department offices include the Legislative Committee since the 2021 command year; State Surgeon from 2022 to 2024; and Chair of the Women Veterans Committee since 2023.

In 2022 my husband, Nick Webster, and I moved to Tomah due to a career change for me. Shortly after, we transferred our memberships to Post 10911 in Camp Douglas and District 11. I am currently serving as a Trustee in my Post and the District 11 Surgeon.

Career-wise, I am a Doctor of Chiropractic in the Whole Health Department at the Tomah VA Medical Center. I love serving my fellow Veterans full-time! Nick and I live in Tomah with our son, Jackson, and our two dogs, Aspen and Allie. We spend most of our time chasing around our toddler, but when given the opportunity, we love being outdoors, hiking, traveling, and exploring new places. We are also foodies and enjoy trying restaurants we've never been to before. I am always on the lookout for my next favorite place to grab a bite—if you have suggestions, let me know!

That is it for now, but if you have any needs of me, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Until next time, stay happy and healthy!

Angela Thomsen
State Surgeon
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As I pushed through mile 35 of the grueling Kettle Moraine 100 Miler ultramarathon, somewhere between fatigue and focus, I found myself reflecting deeply on leadership. Out on the trail, stripped of distraction, the parallels between endurance running and effective leadership became very clear. Leading others, much like running an ultramarathon, is not about a burst of brilliance, it's about sustained effort, strategic pacing, and emotional resilience.

In the early miles, everything feels possible. My spirits were high, and the trail was still fresh. It reminded me of the initial phase of any new leadership role: enthusiasm runs high, the vision is clear, and energy fuels momentum. But just like in a race, that early spark can fade quickly. What sustains both runners and leaders is a sense of purpose. Leaders must anchor themselves to the "why," just as runners anchor themselves to the reason they started the race in the first place.

By mile 50, my body began to protest. It was here that self-doubt crept in, a moment familiar to anyone who has led through uncertainty or crisis. I realized that great leadership is not about pretending to be invulnerable; it's about pushing forward even when you're not at your best, and being honest about limitations. Vulnerability on the trail keeps you safe; vulnerability in leadership fosters trust.

Around mile 70, I hit the infamous "wall." It's a space where the mind tries to convince the body to stop. Here, I thought of the importance of mindset in leadership. The best leaders anticipate the wall, prepare

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for it, and have strategies to move through it. Be it through support systems, reflection, or sheer grit. Resilience, I learned, is built in moments like these.

Ultramarathons are also rarely won or lost alone. Aid stations, fellow runners, volunteers, all play a role in your success. In leadership, too, no one climbs mountains solo. Listening to others, showing appreciation, and lifting teammates up matter more than any one individual's strength. Empathy and collaboration become critical.

As I neared the final stretch, exhausted yet driven, I thought of how leadership is ultimately a long-distance commitment. It's about showing up day after day, leading with humility, adapting when things get tough, and never losing sight of the end goal. Even when the path is unclear.

Crossing the finish line wasn't just a physical accomplishment. It was a reminder that leadership, like ultrarunning, is a test of endurance, mindset, and heart. And sometimes, the greatest clarity comes not from a meeting room, but from a quiet trail, one foot in front of the other.

Comrades,
I am proud to announce we have accomplished the mission: 102% membership for the 2024–2025 year — the highest growth the Department has seen in recent memory. This is the direct result of YOUR hard work and dedication.

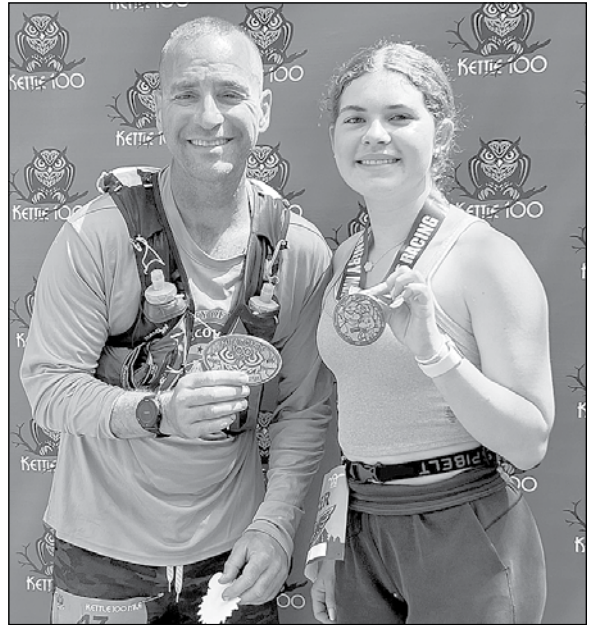
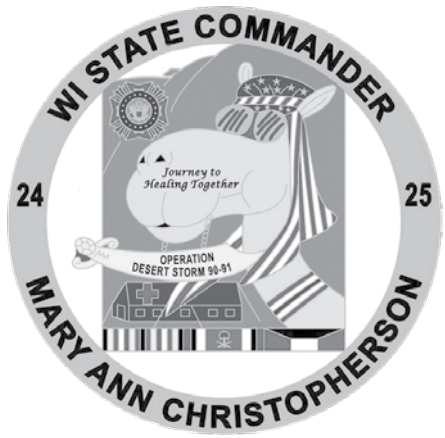
This remarkable accomplishment is more than a number. It's the successful completion of a mission set forth by our late Mary Ann Christopherson, whose vision and determination inspired comrades across the state and beyond.

YOU accepted the challenge, this Journey to Healing Together, and YOU made it count. Your relentless dedication, passion, and teamwork have



brought Mary Ann's goal to life.

I want to thank all of you who supported this journey. Your collective effort turned a challenge into a proud legacy that will live forever. I'm confident that Mary Ann is smiling down with pride. What a way to finish the year. Thank you once again for a wonderful year, and I look forward to meeting Commander Letto's mission this year so let's "MAKE IT COUNT!"



LEFT: Ready and raring to go just before 6:00 am on Saturday, June 14.
RIGHT: Daughter Laura Geisler was a big help as a "pacer" for many miles, especially the brutal final two!

MEMBERSHIP

Year End Membership Totals By District

Dist.	Life	New	Reinstate	Continuous	Total	Adj. Prior Year	Percentage
1	2270	144	103	369	2886	2665	108.29%
2	3127	58	27	367	3579	3537	101.18%
3	731	10	7	113	861	850	101.29%
4	1156	20	7	130	1313	1283	102.33%
6	1706	31	8	159	1904	1881	101.22%
7	2119	47	16	266	2448	2456	99.67%
8	1815	54	15	234	2118	2047	103.46%
9	2531	84	24	161	2800	2772	101.01%
10	1317	37	13	215	1582	1565	101.08%
11	1615	27	17	218	1877	1896	98.99%
99	1472	111	133	219	1935	1861	103.97%
Totals	19859	623	370	2451	23303	22813	102.14%

Totals as of June 30, 2025
404 Legacy Life Members

Recurring Incentives throughout the 2025-26 Command Year
(applies to new and reinstates):

1st Member Recruited:
Receive a letter from the State Commander and ordering information for a "Recruit Wisconsinbly" T-shirt (the recruiter is responsible for sending t-shirt size to the Membership Chairman).



3 Members Recruited:
Receive a letter from State Commander and a State Commander's Coin.



5 Members Recruited:
Receive a Certificate of Accomplishment, mentioned in the VFW News, and Commander's Stainless-Steel Cup.



25 Members Recruited:
Receive a Certificate of Accomplishment, mentioned in the VFW News, and Commander's Wind Jacket.

50 or more Members Recruited: Receive a J. R. Weber Award: \$250, "50 Members Recruited" plaque and a National Appointment recommended by the State Commander and made by the Commander-in-Chief.

The above mentioned incentives and other membership programs can be found in the 2025-26 Commander's Program book, starting on page 11 (Membership Program 2025-26). Incentives for upgrading to Life Membership or Legacy Life Membership are found on page 14. You can find the Commander's Program Book and all appropriate forms by logging into the State website at vfwwi.org under members only area and then click on Department Governing Documents.

Recruit WISCONSINBLY!

We reached our goal for the 2024-25 membership year! Special thanks to Chairman Randy Engness and Legacy Life Chairman Gundel Metz for having a year that Honorary Commander Mary Ann Christopherson would have been proud of.

Let's now start this 2025-26 Command Year strong to reach a membership goal of 101%. By starting right now, we can achieve this goal for this year! Our membership mission is to Recruit, Retain, and Reinstate a stable and a growing membership base for the VFW of Wisconsin.

PLEASE check out the **entire 2025-2026 Membership Program** in Cdr. Letto's Program Book, pages 11-18. Visit: vfwwi.org and **LOGIN**, then **Members Only**. We have an awesome "Recruit Wisconsinbly" Membership Team this year, with each person guiding different aspects of Membership:

- Michele Rathke – Chairman
- Randy Engness – Co-Chair/Budget
- Carla McAndrew – Public Affairs
- Keith Lauth – Special Events/District/Post Assistance
- Brent Hibbard – Training
- Dan Southworth – Legacy/At-Large Membership Special
- Michelle Leick-Leurquin – Events/Swag
- Tony Wright – District/Post Assistance
- Randy Meyer – Special Events/Swag
- Jason Coffey – Raceway Coordinator/Swag
- Paul Morrison – President, VFW Riders

Info to contact the Team is on page 18 of the Program Book.

We will have several different **Monthly Recruiter Contests** this year. Recruiters leading with the most new and reinstated Life Members on the last day of the month will receive a monthly prize, listed below. In the event of a tie, a drawing will be held to determine the winner. (Recruiters must have a minimum of 5 Life members recruited.) Awards will be based on the current month's totals, not the cumulative total. Recruiters will have the opportunity to compete as the contest restarts at the beginning of each month. **NOTE:** Recruiter is only eligible for one monthly contest prize.

• **August:** Two tickets to the Wisconsin Badgers Football Game vs. Iowa Hawkeyes with the Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore and State Commander Ty Letto. Game date: Saturday, October 11, 2025.

• **September:** One/Two tickets for the VFW National Home Fall Festival Bus Trip, Friday-Sunday, October 24-26, 2025.

• **October:** Two tickets for Hoops for Troops – Milwaukee Bucks OR two tickets for Veterans Salute – Milwaukee Admirals, dates in November TBD.

There will be additional **Monthly Contests** in 2026.

In addition, there are many great **Recurring Incentives** (see flyer at left) and **Extra Incentives** throughout the year, as well as several **special MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM CHALLENGES** each quarter. The 1st Quarter Challenge is:

- **100% Membership Award Deadline (1st Quarter): Tuesday-September 30, 2025**
- Posts with 50 or more members achieving 100% membership by 09/30/2025 will be entered to win \$500 (1 winner). Posts with 49 or less but more than 25 members will be entered to win \$250 (1 winner). (Effective date: 09/30/2025)

Check out the **ENTIRE** Membership Program in the Commander's Book, and let's get **Recruiting Wisconsinbly!**

Michele Rathke
State Membership
Chairman



715-218-0440
MicheleR@vfwwi.org



2024 – 2025 MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE

Final Report
May 2025

Division 1	None qualified
Division 2	Post 2115, Hudson
Division 3	Post 8280, Peplin
Division 4	None qualified
Division 5	Post 7444, Armstrong Creek

\$1,000 Grand Prize Drawing Winner:
Post 11038, Rochester

2024-2025 TOP RECRUITERS

through 6/30/2025

Recruiter	Post	Dist.	Recruits	Recruiter	Post	Dist.	Recruits
James A. Cairo	11038	1	56	De Witt H. Woodworth	1530	11	5
Robert E. Haisler	11038	1	39	James E. Weadge	1621	1	4
Nate J. Haumschild	2115	9	29	Michael E. Zientek	1621	1	4
Jason T. Coffey	11038	1	20	Peter A. Pemrich	1621	1	4
Dena M. McCormick	11038	1	15	Robert L. Roberts	1865	1	4
David G. Green	10818	9	13	Ed A. Robbins	2306	1	4
Randy L. Engness	2204	9	11	Nathan M. Bond	2373	1	4
Steven J. Eisenhauer	1318	2	8	Scott J. Weber	6375	1	4
Jack C. Voight	2778	8	8	Daniel E. McKee	7308	1	4
Michael P. Morgan	6375	1	7	John D. McCoy	7308	1	4
Phillip D. Allen	7308	1	6	Gundel M. E. Metz	1318	2	4
Michael F. Fischer	11038	1	6	Tami Zaleski	2260	2	4
Robin L. Drogsvold	328	2	6	Gary L. Friske	9511	2	4
Anthony R. Matecki	8813	8	6	Rodney J. Lehl	8834	6	4
Thomas E. Heath	1621	1	5	John F. Schaetzel	9202	6	4
Kerry E. McAllen	7591	2	5	Christopher T. Ankele	6003	7	4
Aaron Volling	3635	8	5	Leroy G. Jansky	1038	9	4
				Bartley G. Mauch	7694	11	4

Membership Training

Thursday, August 21, 2025 from 4 p.m. - 8 p.m.

"Let's Roll Out" Recruit Wisconsinbly Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Membership Program for 2025-2026! Welcome to Wisconsin, VFW National Membership Department Eligibility Coordinator "The Legend" Edward (Ed) Stefanak, Jr., and Certified National Recruiter Steve Woodward for over-the-top Membership Training!"

Topics for Training

- ❖ Budgeting for Membership Drives
- ❖ Post Retention Strategies
- ❖ Finding Recruiting Events
- ❖ Setting up your Booth
- ❖ Recruiting Strategies
 - Scenario Based Training (Hands On)

"What an excellent opportunity to receive real deal training from the top VFW Recruiters in the Nation and great training materials and items for your District, Post, Auxiliaries, and Communities!" Those who attend the training in person (physically) will receive special raffle prizes, gas cards, or a certificate of attendance. Also, receive credit towards All-State!

Contact Membership Chairman Michele Rathke at 715-218-0440 for Any Questions



VFW Post 5716
17980 W Beloit Rd
New Berlin, WI 53151

Celebrating our Achievements

In addition to the special awards captured on this page, we recognized many outstanding achievers for the 2024-2025 program year:

Public Servant Awards
Chair, Jason Janecek

- Dispatcher of the Year – Mary Wells, City of Stoughton
- EMT of the Year – Donald Tourdot, Belleville EMS
- Firefighter of the Year – Jeffrey Maynard, Embarrass Volunteer Fire Department
- Co-Law Enforcement Officer of the Year –
 - Officer Gary De Winter, Village of Wrightstown Police Department
 - Captain Heather Martin, Village of Wrightstown Police Department

VFW Member of the Year Award
Chair, Mike “Gunner” Furgal, PSC

- Chue Fue Moua – Post 7591

Poppy Champions
Chair, Renee Simpson, PSC

- VFW
 - 1st Place – Don Bolton, Post 1621
 - 2nd Place – Brian McIlquham, Post 1038
 - 3rd Place – Bob Lawler, Post 8320
- VFWA
 - 1st Place – Patty Jansky, Aux. 1038
 - 2nd Place – Nora Swanson, Aux. 2063
 - 3rd Place – Judy Hatlevig, Aux. 6279
- Top Reports
 - 1st Place – VFW/Aux. 1621
 - 2nd Place – VFW/Aux.1038
 - 3rd Place – VFW/Aux. 10272

VFW NEWS Contest Awards
Chair, Renee Simpson, PSC

- Small Member Post Category (100 members or fewer)
 - 1st Place – Post 2113, De Pere – Randy Hansen, Editor
 - 2nd Place – Post 8338, Barron – Greg Roth, Editor
 - 3rd Place – Post 6709, Waupun – Kevin Iverson, Editor
- Medium Member Post Category (101-200 members)
 - No submissions
- Large Member Post Category (201 or more members)
 - 1st Place – Post 1318, Madison-Cranefield – Gundel Metz, Editor
 - 2nd Place – Post 388, Wausau – Curt Dahlke, Editor
 - 3rd Place – Post 7591, Madison-Day – Cole Slominski, Editor
- National Awards
 - Post 1318’s “VFW NEWS” received a Grand Award in the Small Frequency Category (1-4 issues per year)
 - Post 2113’s “Post and Auxiliary Joint Newsletter” received a Silver Award in the Small Category (1-4 issues per year)
 - Post 7591’s “The Chatter” received a Bronze Award in the Large Frequency Category (5+ issues per year)

VFW Membership Recruiting Awards
Chair, Randy Engness

- 1st Place – James Cairo, Post 11038 – 55 new members
- 2nd Place – Robert Haisler, Post 11038 – 39 new members
- 3rd Place – Nate Haumschild, Post 2115 – 25 new members
- 4th Place – Jason Coffey, Post 11038 – 20 new members
- 5th Place – Dena McCormick, Post 11038 – 15 new members

Congratulations to all, and THANK YOU for your outstanding efforts for the Department of Wisconsin! Info courtesy of 2024-2025 Awards Chair, George Stoeber. Photos by Sherri L. Smith.



Membership Chairman Randy Engness (center) was surprised and touched to receive a commemorative paddle, conceived by Mary Ann Christopherson, to recognize his work for both 2024-2025 and preparation for her year. With him are (from left): State Recorder Mark Dykstra; AAQM Steve Eisenhauer and PSC Ron Ramos.

AWARDS & HONORS



Sue Giese (left) and daughter Ashley Zurkowski display the Past State Commander Continuing Service Award presented posthumously to PSC John Giese, who passed away in April. Chairman Mike Eggleston, PSC looks on at right.



Longtime State Honor Guard member Lenore Otto of the Auxiliary was promoted to the rank of Lt. Colonel at the Banquet, with PSCs Renee Simpson and Mike Eggleston saluting her achievement.



Five Submariners from the Dept. chipped in on a “Spirit of the Corps” Henry Rifle Tribute Edition, commemorating the 250th Anniversary of the Marine Corps, to recognize Ron Ramos for his second year as State Commander. From left are: Steve Eisenhauer; Mark Dykstra; Cdr. Ramos; Scott Weber and Randy Engness. Not present: Brian McIlquham.

S'MORE NEWS

On June 14, 2025, I was honored to be installed as the Department of Wisconsin Auxiliary President in a Joint Installation with VFW Commander Ty Letto. A very special thank you to the installing team, John “Trapper” Schultz, Lenore Otto, and the Honor Guard for all your help in making this such a memorable event. I’d like to give a special thank you to my family for all their support.

Following the Installation, a brief Council Meeting was convened to facilitate the continuation of our Programs. Membership Chairman Vicki Newbauer delivered a presentation while Sherrie Rosenau provided a short update on the President’s Project, and Jennifer Mauritz discussed the President’s Project Visit to The Highground in September.

A very special thank you to VFW Post and Auxiliary 1318 for hosting the reception for Commander Ty Letto and myself later that evening. Thank you, Commander Ty, for making the pulled pork and beef.

This year, our focus is on fostering growth within our organization, which necessitates stepping beyond our comfort zones. Growth is essential for our organization’s survival; without it, we risk stagnation. We must be willing to adapt to external changes as well as those arising from the Bylaws that govern us. Please remember to direct any questions or concerns through the appropriate chain of command.

A Line Officer meeting was held on June 28 at the Department office of the Treasurer. I trust that everyone found the information provided to be highly beneficial to all those in attendance.

The Council of Administration convened in Wisconsin Rapids on July 11 and 12, where we held a Hospital Committee meeting alongside training sessions for District Presidents, Senior Vice Presidents, and Junior Vice Presidents. Additionally, a Joint informational meeting with the VFW fo-


**Kim
McWilliams**
 Department
President
 815-999-9214
 mrsffiiemt@
gmail.com



cused on the **Campfire for Courage** Special Project. That evening, attendees participated in the Campfire for Courage Kickoff party, which supports our initiative to cover the cost for Veterans and their spouses to attend retreats for PTSD at The Highground. We will be working with The Highground to see how we can incorporate other family members as well. The following day featured reports from the Program Chairmen, finishing with the Council Meeting. Overall, it was a highly productive event, and we extend our gratitude to all participants.

The National Convention will be held in Columbus, OH, August 9-13. There is always something to learn there. The deadline to order rally shirts is July 20. Information can be found on our Department website, www.vfwauxwi.org.

I would love to visit your Auxiliary. Just send me a completed visit request form which can be found on our website and in the July information. Stay updated by regularly checking the website and Facebook page for additional information throughout the year. If you have any events that you would like posted, please let us know. We are still updating it so please be patient. The Facebook page is VFW Auxiliary – Department of Wisconsin.

I am eager to collaborate with all of you this year. Commander Ty Letto and I will be working closely to foster unity within our organization and to provide the best possible service to our Veterans and families. *“We Rise by Lifting Others”, “From Sea to Shining Sea, Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free”.*

FROM THE CHIEF-OF-STAFF

I am so honored to be your Chief-of-Staff this year. We are going to be concentrating on making our Auxiliaries healthy and growing stronger Auxiliaries.

What does Extension & Revitalization mean? Extension is simply starting a new Auxiliary. Revitalization is bringing new life and vitality to your Auxiliary and mentoring to advise or train your members.

In MALTA (Membership Auxiliary Leadership Technology Access, on the NATIONAL website, vfwauxiliary.org) there are vast amounts of tools available to aid us in that goal. Under Member Resources, then Extension & Revitalization, there are seven resources listed in the Healthy Auxiliary Tool Kit. Familiarize yourself with them. They are invaluable for keeping your Auxiliary healthy. When we are healthy, we provide better service to our Veterans, their families and communities.

If your Auxiliary is struggling, reach out to the Department President or me, and we will get you the help that you need. No one wants to see an Auxiliary go down, and we are here to help.

Not sure if your Auxiliary is struggling? Here are five essential signs that you may be struggling:

1. Are you getting in new members?
2. Have your program reports been completed?
3. Are you helping Veterans and families get the assistance they need?
4. Are your officers staying the same year after year?


**Sherrie
Rosenau**
 Chief-of-Staff
 920-251-8888
 littlemama6
@yahoo.com



5. Are there personality issues amongst your members?

Depending on the answer, these are all signs that your Auxiliary indeed may be struggling.

There are occasions when an Auxiliary must be put on suspension. The purpose is to bring them back to being a healthy Auxiliary. Mentoring is a huge part of the suspension process. No one wants to see an Auxiliary go down.

Training and educating members to be future leaders is another reason why we mentor. We must ensure that the legacy of the VFW Auxiliary continues through strong and healthy Auxiliaries. Blend the past with the present to guarantee our future. Mentors are both counselors and cheerleaders. They are there to help, encourage, and support while offering guidance and training.

National Chief-of-Staff Karlene Beams’ theme for this year is *“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf!”* Go out and have some fun, have some laughs and get people talking!

Remember: Everybody’s going surfin’, surfin’ VFWA!

AUXILIARY

SEEKING OUR
MEMBERSHIP TREASURE

Within the depths of the Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary “sea” there lies unclaimed, valuable membership treasure, as well as “lost” treasure along our vast shoreline. We need to explore that sea and find those new and lapsed members to help support our Veterans programs within our organization and communities.

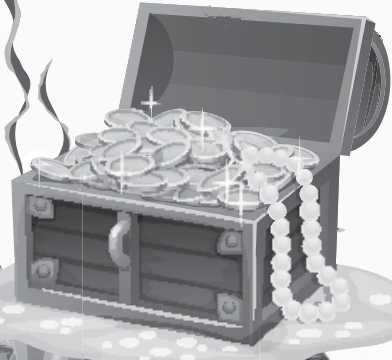
We treasure the freedoms our brave men and women have fought to preserve. Caring for **Heroes Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow** has given us our family name: The **CHYTT** family. Let’s add to that family by asking our VFW counterparts if their spouse and family members are members of the Auxiliary. If they are not members, sign them up!

Here are some ways to recruit new members: Joint VFW/Auxiliary Open House; Exclusive Membership Drives; State/County Fairs (with prior approval); Patriotic Gatherings (with prior approval); Newspaper articles; Partnering with our VFW Auxiliary Program Chairmen (the Giggles) from Extensions & Revitalization, Youth Activities, Scholarships, etc.

Our next “Ports of Call” are the Big Ten Conference in Iowa October 17-18; the Fall Council of Administration in Beaver Dam on November

15; the Mid-Winter Conference in Appleton February 6-7, 2026; and our final stop – the 2026 Convention in Rothschild June 10-13, 2026. Each stop will reveal the waves of family expansion and present treasures at certain destinations.

I look forward to exploring the Seas of Wisconsin with you. Be prepared to see a year full of CHYTTs and giggles!




**Vicki
Newbauer**
 Membership
Chairman
 715-257-2099
 vnewbauer1950@
gmail.com

2024-2025 Final Membership Stats

Auxiliary	Current Total	Deceased	Paid Total	Prior Total	Current Percent	Paid Percent
Total – Non-District	467	8	475	506	92.29%	93.87%
Total – Dist. 2	1084	32	1116	1091	99.36%	102.29%
Total – Dist. 4	286	3	289	281	101.78%	102.85%
Total – Dist. 6	498	16	514	507	98.42%	101.38%
Total – Dist. 7	1245	236	1281	1272	97.88%	100.71%
Total – Dist. 8	815	31	846	857	95.10%	98.72%
Total – Dist. 9	766	22	788	789	97.08%	99.87%
Total – Dist. 10	685	24	709	682	100.44%	103.96%
Total – Dist. 11	447	11	458	455	98.24%	100.66%
WI – At Large	1129	239	1368	1393	81.05%	98.21%
Total – Dept. of WI	7422	422	7844	7833	94.75%	100.14%

From the Heart,
 I would like to express my deep gratitude to all of those Auxiliary and Post members, Line Officers and Program Chairs throughout the state that helped make my year a success. I couldn’t have done it without your support and guidance.

I would especially like to thank my husband for his support, patience, and love during my climb through the chairs. This is all truly from my heart to yours. Keep working hard for our Veterans.

Cheryl L. Woodards, PDP



2025-26 Theme for Patriot’s Pen
and Voice of Democracy

*"How Are You Showing Patriotism
and Support for Our Country?"*

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
328	Judy Casey*	Stoughton	3392	Viola M. Seidl*	Kewaunee
388	Delores Bartelt*	Wausau	5778	Viola Boehm*	Phillips
388	Doris E. Erdman*	Wausau	6003	Ada A. Jones*	Madison
388	Ruth Grell*	Wausau	6705	Lorraine Whetung	Maribel
388	Lucille C. Milkowski*	Mosinee	7232	Geraldine M. O'Gary*	Cottage Grove, MN
388	Carol J. Raasch*	Avon Park, FL	7591	Janet M. Hasse*	Pardeeville
388	Delores Sherbert*	Wausau	7591	Joann C. Miller*	Cottage Grove
1621	Cheryl Sheridan	Janesville	7896	Carol F. Loeffelholz*	Platteville
1865	William Dronso*	Racine	7929	Janice Petersen*	Amery
1866	Carmen R. Reeths*	Lodi	8400	Mary Gail Stack*	Watersmeet, MI
2113	Paul Moran	Green Bay	9156	Bernice E. Walter*	Sheboygan
2119	Iva Menting*	Mountain	9362	Brian Benson*	Sun Prairie
2260	Susan M. Berginz*	New Berlin	10262	Susan Allen*	Stevens Point
2260	Shirley Ann Hart*	Oconomowoc	10262	Carol Pliska*	Plover
2260	Julia H. Miller*	Oconomowoc	15051	Dolores Bukowski	Princeton
3392	Rita M. LeGreve*	Luxemburg	15051	Janice Hubbard	Platteville

* DENOTES LIFE MEMBER

2025 “Buddy”® Poppy Contest Results

Thank you to all who participated in the Contest at Convention, and congratulations to this year’s winners:

CATEGORY 1: Public Promotion of Poppy Campaign

- 1st place – Aux. 8584, Cashton - \$75
- 2nd place – Aux. 8478, Augusta - \$50

CATEGORY 2: No entries

CATEGORY 3: Artistic or Decorative Use of Poppies

- 1st place – Aux. 388, Wausau - \$75
- 2nd place – Aux. 1038, Chippewa Falls - \$50
- 3rd place – Aux. 659, Manitowoc - \$25

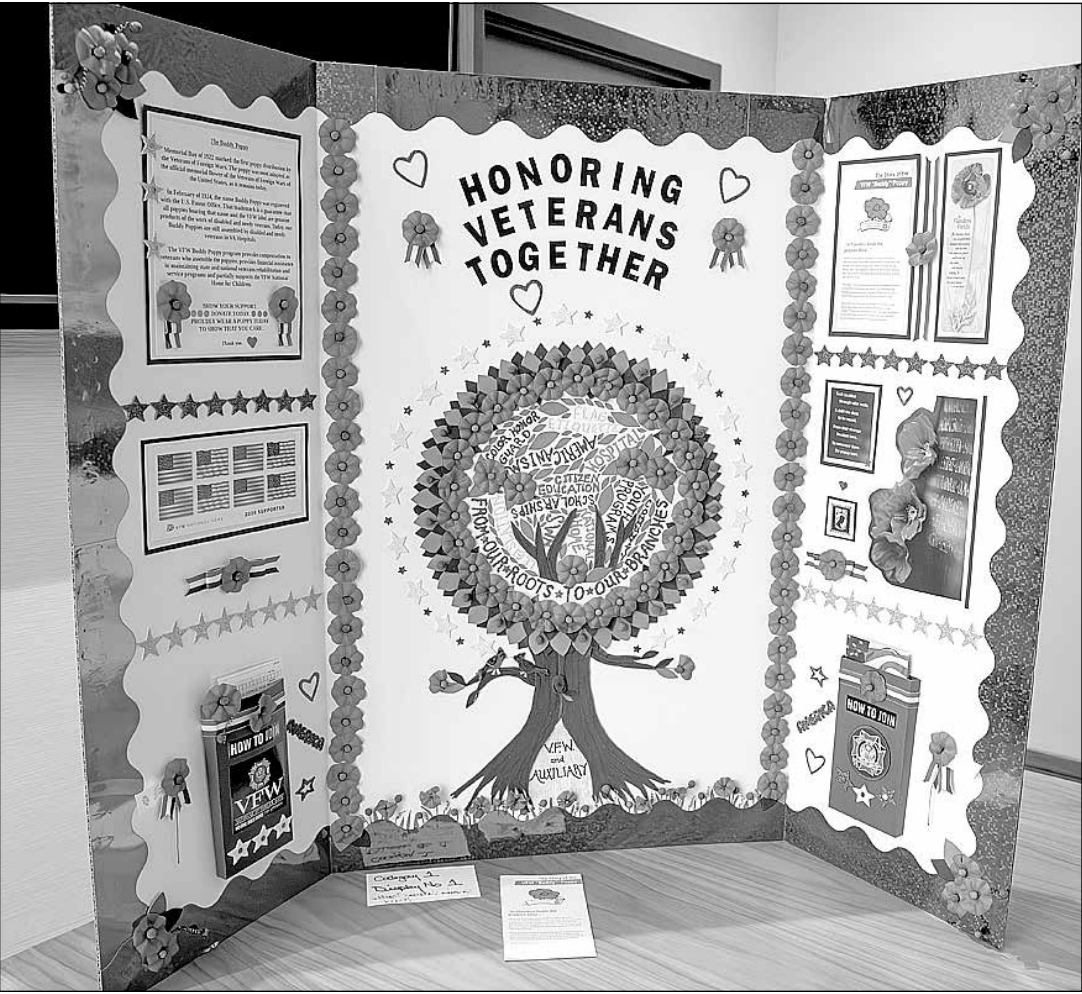
MOST IMPRESSIVE:

- Aux. 1038, Chippewa Falls- \$25

Please continue to promote one of the most recognized symbols of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary, and publicize what each donation received does for our Veterans, their families and our communities.

Renee L. Simpson, PSC
2024-2025 VFW Poppy Chair

Susan Carlson
2024-2025 VFWA Poppy Chair



ABOVE: Cat. 1. First – Aux. 8584, Cashton
AT RIGHT: Cat. 3 First – Aux. 388, Wausau
BELOW LEFT: Cat. 1 Second – Aux. 8478, Augusta
BELOW CENTER: Cat. 3 Second and Most Impressive – Aux. 1038, Chippewa Falls
BELOW RIGHT: Cat. 3 Third – Aux. 659, Manitowoc



★ ★ ★ ★ 2024-2025 All-State Awards ★ ★ ★ ★



AT LEFT: Team Captain: Post 11038 (Rochester) Commander Michael Fischer (center) with State Cdr. Ron Ramos (left) and VFW Asst. Adjutant General Brian Walker. Post Quartermaster Jim Cairo was unable to attend the Friday evening Banquet. ABOVE: All-State Team Captain Post 11038 (Rochester) QM Jim Cairo received his cover from State Cdr. Ron Ramos at the Saturday Business Session. He was also recognized as the District Team Captain, receiving his cover as District 1 All-State Commander.



Co-Captains: Post 2115 (Hudson) Commander Nate Haumschild and Quartermaster Richard Byers.



Co-Captains: Post 2113 (De Pere) Quartermaster Randy Hansen. Post 2113 Commander Pat Moran was unable to attend.



Post 1621 (Janesville) Commander Michael Zientek and Quartermaster Thomas Heath.



Post 6375 (Elkhorn) Quartermaster Michael Morgan and Commander Scott Weber.



Post 7308 (Pleasant Prairie) Commander John McCoy. Quartermaster Larry Sorensen was unable to attend.



Post 10549 (New Glarus) Commander Robert Harvey and Quartermaster William Hustad.

★ ★ ★ ★ 2024-2025 All-State Awards ★ ★ ★ ★



Post 328 (Stoughton) Commander Rob Drogsvold. Quartermaster Dennis Schwenn was unable to attend.



Post 7591 (Madison-Day) Commander Kerry McAllen. Quartermaster Jon Russell was unable to attend.



Post 6279 (Adams) Commander Scott Colburn and Quartermaster Terry Hatlevig.



Post 10187 (Edgar) Commander Dale Dahlke. Quartermaster Thomas Napierala was unable to attend.



Post 3635 (Florence) Commander Aaron Volling. Quartermaster Joseph Mills was unable to attend. Aaron was also recognized as District 8 All-State Commander.



Post 7534 (Village of Howard) Quartermaster John Wierer and Commander Bruce Jagodinski.



Post 7692 (Freedom) Quartermaster James Reader and Commander Hank Calmes.



Post 8338 (Barron) Commander Edward Quinn and Quartermaster Greg Roth.



VFW Auxiliary Dept. President Cheryl Woodards (left) and Dept. SVP/Achievement Awards Chair Kim McWilliams (far right) pose with the 2024-2025 Achievement Award Winners: Michelle Buehler representing Aux. 1393 (West Bend); Patty Jansky, President, Aux. 1038 (Chippewa Falls); Dist. 11 President Rita Byers; District 10 President Vicki Newbauer.

Photos by
Sherri L. Smith

Meet Our 2025-26 Chief-of-Staff and District Commanders

Keith Lauth
Chief-of-Staff
VFW
920-319-0452
cos@vfwwi.org



Steven Eisenhauer
District 2
VFW
420-239-3737
dist2cmd@vfwwi.org



Keith Lauth grew up in Beaver Dam and graduated from Beaver Dam High School, joining the U.S. Marine Corps on June 6, 1989. After completing Basic Training in San Diego and Marine Combat Training at Camp Pendleton California, he went on to Marine Aircraft Life Support System Technician (Parachute Rigger) School in Lakehurst, New Jersey. Keith then joined the Fleet Marine Force via Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 164, Marine Air Group 16, 3rd Marine Air Wing, Marine Corps Air Station Tustin, California, in the Flight Equipment Shop.

His first deployment was with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) aboard the USS Okinawa LPH 3, June 1990 - April 1991. During that deployment, the 13th MEU(SOC) took part in all three phases of the 1st Gulf War: Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and Desert Saber. His second deployment was with the 15th MEU(SOC) aboard the USS Tripoli LPH 10, September 1992 - April 1993, where they spearheaded Operation Restore Hope in the Country of Somalia.

Since being Honorably Discharged from active service on June 6, 1994 with the rank of Corporal, Keith has been teaching scuba diving for the past 30 years as a Master Scuba Diver Trainer. Working in numerous construction trades, most notably as an HVAC Technician, he is currently the Director of Facilities at Ripon College, overseeing the Maintenance, Housekeeping and Grounds Departments.

A Bronze Legacy Life Member of Post 1163 in Beaver Dam, Keith has served in many offices at all levels, including District 2 Commander in 2019-2021; National Aide-de-Camp 2023-2024; and currently, Post and District Quartermaster as well as a Member of the State Honor Guard, and now State Chief-of-Staff. He and his lovely wife Cindy have two daughters, Emily (27) and Chloe (17), and one grandchild, Lilly (2), who also reside in Beaver Dam.

James Cairo
District 1
VFW
262-237-2593
dist1cmd@vfwwi.org



A Gold Legacy Life Member of Aspinall-Bair-Stober Post 11038 in Rochester, Jim Cairo served 21 years in the U.S. Army. He gained his eligibility for the VFW while serving in Iraq from 2003-2004.

Jim has held numerous offices and appointments at the Post, District and Department Levels. He was elected to Post Commander in 2023, earning All-State and All-American honors. He has also served as Quartermaster of Post 11038, earning 6 All-State and 3 All-American honors. This is his second term as Commander of District 1. He is also serving a second term as State Finance Chairman.

Commander Cairo resides in Waterford with his wife of 22 years, Miki Cairo, and their 4 children. When not busy serving Veterans, Jim served as Master of his Masonic Lodge #247, Commander of American Legion Post 20, Waterford Lions President, and Scoutmaster of Troop 338.

Steve Eisenhauer is a second-generation sailor, serving in the United States Navy Submarine Service from 1982 - 2004. Following initial basic training, he was assigned to the USS James K. Polk (SSBN 645) Gold crew. During his time onboard, he made two strategic deterrent patrols, earning his eligibility for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

During his career he served as a Radioman and earned his commission as a Submarine Communications Limited Duty Officer. He also served aboard the USS Dolphin (AGSS 555), a Deep Submergence Research and Development submarine, and the USS McKee (AS 41). Steve's shore command tours included Commander, Submarine Forces U.S. Pacific Fleet, United States Atlantic Command, United States Joint Forces Command, and United States Strategic Command.

Joining the VFW in 2019, Steve is a Gold Legacy Life Member of Lt. Marion C. Cranefield VFW Post 1318 in Madison. He is currently serving his third term as Post Commander, achieving All-State and All-American honors in 2023-2024 and All-American in 2024-2025. This is his second term as District 2 Commander.

Additionally, he is a member of USS Wisconsin SSBN 827 Association and a founding member of the Submarine Advisory Group. A resident of Cottage Grove, Steve is also our State VFW Assistant Adjutant/Quartermaster.

John Scanlan
District 3
VFW
608-732-2929
dist3cmd@vfwwi.org



John Scanlan served in the USMC from 1994-98. While in the Marines, he served in California, North Carolina, and as he says, "Germany for two months by mistake." He was Meritoriously promoted to Lance Corporal when he finished at the top of his MOS class. He served in HQ Battery 10th Marines Motor T. After his promotion to Corporal, he became a squad leader, the barracks NCO for his platoon, and the parts room NCO. He left the Marines in 1998.

In June 2001, Scanlan joined the 229th Combat Support Equipment Engineers, WI Army National Guard. He was sent to Nicaragua, Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Germany, Washington D.C., Alaska, Hawaii, Arizona, Florida, and Minnesota. He earned his eligibility for the VFW in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. As part of the 229th, he was a dump truck and low boy operator. He also learned how to operate all of the equipment the company had, also serving as the licensing and training NCO, the Equal Opportunity NCO, the Family Support NCO, and a squad leader. While in Iraq, John was injured from an IED, receiving the Purple Heart. John was Medically Retired from the National Guard in 2013.

A member of Joseph F. McCrea Memorial VFW Post 7896 in Benton since his return from Iraq, John has served as Post Commander since 2009. He has also been District 3 Adjutant and Quartermaster, and is a VFW Rider in his District. He has earned All-State honors as Post Commander, as well as All-State and All-American

honors as District Quartermaster. He has also served as National Aide-de-Camp.

John currently works full-time as a Network Engineer. He also is a volunteer Emergency Medical First Responder for the Benton First Responders and Hazel Green Area Rescue Squad. A resident of Benton, John is married, with two kids, three stepchildren and four grandkids. In the little spare time he has, he enjoys riding motorcycles and camping.

Alex J. Kaleta
District 4
VFW
414-614-0478
dist4cmd@vfwwi.org



Born and raised in Hammond, Indiana, Alex Kaleta began his military career in January 1970, completing Basic Combat Training and Combat Engineer Advance Individual Training at Fort Leonard Wood, MO, and later attending Field Artillery Officer Candidate School (OCS) and receiving his commission as a Field Artillery 2nd Lieutenant. He is also a graduate of the Sergeant Missile Officers Course, Field Artillery Advanced Course, Chemical Officer Specialty Course, Command and General Staff College; and is Airborne and Air Assault qualified. He received his appointment as a Regular Army (RA) Officer in May 1978.

During his 20 years of active military service, Alex served in a variety of positions overseas in Korea and Germany. Some of his military decorations include: Meritorious Service Medal (2 Oak Leaf Clusters), Army Commendation Medal, Army Expeditionary Medal, Korea Defense Service Medal. He retired from active military service as an Army field grade officer (Major) on January 31, 1990.

Receiving his Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue University, Alex also holds a Master of Public Service degree from Western Kentucky University, and has completed several Graduate courses at Marquette University. Joining the Office of the Registrar at Marquette University in August 1990 as an Assistant Registrar, Alex retired from Marquette on January 30, 2015 as Senior Associate Registrar.

A Life Member of the VFW since 2005, Alex has held numerous offices including: Post 1465 Adjutant; District 4 Service Officer and ROTC Award Coordinator, as well as JVC and SVC. This is his first term as District 4 Commander.

Besides his VFW involvement, Alex is currently active with the following organizations: Co-Chair of the Wauwatosa Veterans Memorial Committee; Treasurer of the SE Wisconsin Chapter of MOAA (Military Officers Association of America); Chair of the Marquette University Retiree Association (MURA); Member of American Legion Post 449; Member/VFW representative for the Milwaukee County Veterans Association. He was also active as a member of St. Bernard's Church and as an Adult leader in Troop 28 Boy Scouts of America for 15+ years.

Alex and his wife Kathleen, who is a retired Lieutenant Colonel - Army Nurse Corps, have resided in Wauwatosa since 1987. They have 3 adult children and 2 grandchildren.

Robert Buehler
District 6
VFW
262-334-4013
dist6cmd@vfwwi.org



Wisconsin native and lifelong resident Bob Buehler graduated from UW-Whitewater in December 1981, where he was also commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army Reserve through ROTC. He feels privileged to have

served in a variety of increased leadership and staff positions during a 30+ year service with the United States Army Reserve, from January 1981 to December 2011.

Bob's active-duty assignments (January 1981 to August 1993) included: Fort Sill, OK; Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD; a 1-year overseas tour in the Republic of South Korea (HQs, 19th Support Command), and Rock Island Arsenal, IL.

His Reserve assignments from Jan 1994 through to retirement in Dec 2011, included: 84th Division in Milwaukee, WI; 2nd Brigade, 85th Division at Fort McCoy, WI; mobilization in support of Operation Noble Eagle; and upon promotion to Colonel, service as Deputy Chief of Staff for Materiel (G-4) for the 416th Theater Engineer Command (TEC) in Darien, IL. Bob also transferred into the Multi-Functional Support Command (MSFC) at Rock Island Arsenal, IL, and served a 1-year overseas mobilization tour in Kuwait/Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (November 2008 to October 2009).

Bob concluded his career at Rock Island, IL as a Joint Munitions Command Detachment Commander. He is a Distinguished Graduate of the Air Assault School at Fort Campbell, KY, and a 2009 Inductee to the Ordnance Order of Samuel Sharpe. A Bronze Legacy Life member of VFW Post 1393 in West Bend, he continues to serve as Post Commander. This is Bob's fifth consecutive term as District 6 Commander and his second term on the VFW NEWS Committee.

Dale Dahlke
District 7
VFW
715-521-0046
dist7cmd@vfwwi.org



Dale Dahlke is serving his second term as VFW District 7 Commander. He served as the District 7 Adjutant from 2015-2023. He is a Gold Legacy Life Member of Edgar Memorial VFW Post 10187 since November 2011, serving as Post Adjutant, SVC and JVC, and is now in his third term as Post Commander. Post 10187 earned All-State and All-American honors in 2024-2025.

A U.S. Navy Veteran, Dahlke joined the United States Naval Reserve SAM Program (Sea-Air-Mariner) under the Delayed Entry Program in November 1983. He did boot camp at Great Lake Illinois in early 1984 and attended the Navy Electricity/Electronics A-School at the Great Lakes Naval Base from late 1984 to July 1985. As a "Weekend Warrior", he drilled at the Naval Reserve Facilities in Plover, Stevens Point and then Green Bay. During some drill weekends, they worked on the WWII Submarine USS Cobia in Manitowoc to bring some systems back to life for the public tours given to the visitors at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum. Dale achieved the rank of Navy Chief Petty Officer in 2007. He served for over 28 years in the Naval Reserve, retiring in September 2012.

Dale's VFW eligibility was earned with his activation in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from September 2010 to November 2011. Assigned to the Air Force 738th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group, 443rd Mission Support Squadron, at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, his duties included training and mentoring Afghan Air Force personnel on computer and phone systems and wiring, as well as military bearing. He also did installs and upgrades on the Army computers for the Air Force Squadrons, and held the position of Squadron Superintendent for the 443rd Mission Support Squadron. So, he was a Naval Reserve Chief Petty Officer, wearing an Army ACU uniform (with Navy patches), working for the Air Force.

Dahlke lives near Edgar, WI, with his wife Amy. They have four children and four grandchildren. He currently works in the Telecom industry.

Meet Our 2025-26 Chief-of-Staff and District Commanders

Aaron
Volling
District 8262-930-9100
dist8cmd@vfwwi.org

Krist holds a B.S. degree in Professional Aeronautics from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. He currently resides in Buffalo City, Wisconsin, with his wife Kimberly, a U.S. Air Force Veteran who served as a C-130 Hercules medical crew member in support of Operation Desert Storm. Kimberly is also a Life Member of the VFW Auxiliary. Together, they enjoy camping, fishing, duck hunting with their dog Millie, and spending time with family. Krist continues to serve his community as a civilian fixed-wing medevac pilot for a major healthcare organization based in Rochester, Minnesota.

Frank
Leuschen
District 10715-558-2110
dist10cmd@vfwwi.org

Frank Leuschen was elected to his first term as District 10 Commander in April 2025. Prior to his election, he also served terms as District Trustee, Jr. Vice Cdr., and Sr. Vice Cdr. He is a Life Member of Musky Capitol VFW Post 7233 in Hayward, where he currently serves as Sr. Vice Commander.

Serving in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1980 – 2000, Frank earned his eligibility for the VFW in Desert Shield and Desert Storm, in both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, with the 2nd BN, 2nd Marines.

Moving to Hayward following his retirement from the Marine Corps in 2000, Frank worked in Fire Control for the Dept. of Natural Resources, as well as Sawyer County Ambulance Service. He is married with two adult sons, and the first grandchild on the way later this year.

Tricia
Flaig
District 11715-712-4141
dist11cmd@vfwwi.org

Tricia Flaig served in the U.S. Navy from 1997 – 2006. While in the Navy, she was stationed at Naval Air Station Brunswick, Maine, with Patrol Squadron Ten (VP-10), Navy Recruiting Command Minneapolis, and Electronic Attack Squadron 130 (VAQ 130) out of Whidbey Island, Washington. Tricia served as an Aviation Structural Mechanic – Survival Equipmentman (AME) and Naval Recruiter, achieving the rank of AME2.

Tricia transferred into the General RB McCoy VFW Post 2112 in Sparta in 2016, having been a member at large since the early 2000s. She is a Bronze Legacy Life Member and has served as Post Adjutant and Post Quartermaster. She earned All-State honors two years in a row, and All-American Post one year. She also proudly serves in the Honor Guard with the Post.

This is her first term as District 11 Commander, having served as District Jr. Vice Commander the previous term. Tricia looks forward to a fun and productive year with the Posts in District 11.

Additionally, Tricia continues her service to Veterans and her country as a Carpenter at the Tomah VA Medical Center, where she has been employed since returning to Wisconsin in 2014. She regularly volunteers her time at the Tomah VAMC, both with recreation activities with the Veterans and on the Honor Escort for Veterans who have passed.

She and her husband Dan have been married since 2013. Tricia has a son and daughter from her first marriage, and five very active grandchildren ranging in age

from 9 months to 11 years old. They bring both Dan and Tricia much joy. She enjoys the outdoors, gardening, camping with family, concerts and exploring the country.

SPECIAL PROJECT DONATIONS

may be made using the QR code on the flyer
OR

by check payable to:

Wisconsin VFW Foundation

c/o Renee Simpson, Sec/Treas

PO Box 242, Camp Douglas, WI 54618

Memo: 25-26 Joint Project – The Highground

Greeting Comrades!

I am honored to be your State Special Project Chair for the 2025-26 year. I would first like to thank Commander Letto for this appointment.

This year, the Commander and President's Special Project is "Campfire for Courage," an ambitious fundraising drive aiming to secure sponsorship to cover 200 Veterans' or family members' PTSD retreat experience at The Highground Veterans Memorial Park.

The cost for **one** Veteran/family member retreat participation is **\$500**, hence our ambitious goal of **\$100,000**. This project is all about sticking to our roots, and truly "Doing More For Veterans", so instead of tracking how much money we raise, we will be focusing on how many Veterans and family members we support.

If you are not familiar with The Highground, please take the time if you have it and visit the facility in Neillsville. (Website: thehighground.us) It is a beautiful place that is truly focused on Veterans. The Highground runs retreats focused on both female Veterans and male Veterans. Now, through "Campfire for Courage," the VFW is stepping up to expand access, including family members, for Project PTSD relief. Funds raised will go towards full retreat participation fees, including lodging,

Nate
Haumschild
Special Projects
Chair715-410-6913
nhaumschild@vfwpst2115.org

meals, supplies, and workshops. Inclusive pairing allows each Veteran to bring along an adult family member — spouse, partner, or caregiver — to journey through the healing process together.

By promoting unity and shared healing, "Campfire for Courage" supports VFW's mission to elevate Veteran wellness and strengthen communities. This sponsorship effort will enable disabled and underserved Veterans, alongside their families, to access empathy-driven resources, forge supportive bonds, and discover new paths to posttraumatic healing.

Please check out the details in the Commander's Program Book (**LOGIN/Members Only** at vfwwi.org) and feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions. Looking forward to a great year of helping Veterans!



**SUPPORTING PTSD RETREATS
FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES**

WISCONSIN VFW COMMANDER'S SPECIAL PROJECT 2025-26

**GOAL: TO HELP 200
VETERANS AND FAMILIES**

**\$500 SPONSORS
ONE VETERAN
OR SPOUSE**

**THE
HIGHGROUND**



Krist D. Beseler began his affiliation with the VFW in 1995 as a Member-at-Large at Camp Casey in Dongducheon, South Korea. During a military leave around 1998, he joined Cochrane-Buffalo City Post 10406 in Cochrane where he has remained a dedicated member ever since. After returning home to complete his military service at Fort McCoy in 2009, he served in various roles at his Post. Under his leadership as Post Commander, Post 10406 earned the prestigious designations of All-State and All-American. In 2021, Krist was elected as an Officer in District 9, and in 2024, he was elected District Commander, now serving his second term.

Krist's military career began in 1986 when he enlisted in the U.S. Army as an infantryman with the 2/502 Infantry Regiment at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. In 1989, he transitioned briefly to the U.S. Army Reserves, serving as a motor transport and heavy equipment operator with Alpha Company, 389th Engineer Battalion (Combat Heavy) in Onalaska, Wisconsin. The following year, he joined the 1st Army Non-Commissioned Officer Academy at Fort McCoy as a reserve instructor on active duty.

In 1993, he was accepted into the U.S. Army's Warrant Officer Flight Training Program at Fort Rucker, Alabama, where he graduated as a UH-1H Iroquois (Huey) pilot in 1994. He became a UH-60 Blackhawk pilot in 1995 and, later, in 2006, completed the U.S. Army Fixed Wing Multi-Engine Qualification Course, subsequently serving as a C-12 Huron pilot.

Appointed a Warrant Officer in 1993 and commissioned in 1996, Krist ultimately retired as a Chief Warrant Officer 4 in December 2013, after 27 years of active-duty service. His extensive military service includes assignments across the United States and abroad, including Fort Benning; Fort Campbell; Fort McCoy; Fort Rucker; Fort Carson; Hunter Army Airfield; Camp Stanley and Seoul Airbase (K-16) in South Korea; combat zones at Balad Airbase, Iraq, and Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan.

Brat Frys in Berlin



With a new serving house roof over their heads, and brand new lighting to go with it, Berlin VFW Post 2925 members stand ready and raring to go, to open the 2025 weekly Brat Fry season at the end of May. Serving on Wednesdays from 11 am – 1 pm, the season runs through September 10. *Courtesy of our friends at Berlin Journal Newspapers.*

Helpful Scouts in Denmark

Denmark Cub Scouts and Scouts from Troop 1052 helped place Memorial Day flags to honor Veterans at Saint James Catholic Cemetery in Cooperstown just south of Denmark. What a great group! *Thanks to Richard "Sarge" Verheyen of Post 6705.*



Day of Service in Edgar

Edgar VFW Post 10187 members participated in the VFW Day of Service by helping with straightening and aligning gravestones and bases, and general cleanup at the Edgar Cemetery on May 12-13. The project was a partnership with volunteers from St. John's Church. *Thank you, Dale Dahlke.*

Memorial Day in Plover

As in many other communities, VFW Post 10262 and American Legion Post 543 conducted joint Memorial Day ceremonies at seven area cemeteries and two memorials. Here, the VFW Rifle Squad pays tribute at the Plover Cemetery. *Thank you, Debbie Manthey.*



Post 10441 Marks 50th



Tichigan Area Memorial VFW Post 10441 was mustered on May 25, 1975. Cdr. Mark Balkovich (center) and QM Phil Tojek proudly display their Golden Anniversary Award to commemorate their first 50 years of service. State SVC Renee Simpson was proud to present the certificate at a well-attended monthly meeting, on behalf of CIC Al Lipphardt. *Thank you, Renee.*

A Salute to Walter Groth



Newly-installed State Commander Ty Letto (left) was delighted to visit City of Wauwatosa VFW Post 1465's June meeting to recognize Walter Groth for his incredible 47 years as Post Commander, the last 45 of them consecutive years. Cdr. Letto noted, "Walter Groth's life is a testament to the enduring impact of selfless service. His tireless efforts have not only changed lives, they have strengthened the fabric of his community and honored the sacrifice of countless Veterans." Cdr. Groth is a 55-year Life Member, and we salute him for his service, then and now. *Thank you, Ty.*

A Meeting of the Minds



It is customary for the new VFW State Commander and the WDVA Secretary to meet early in the command year, and this year's July 2 meeting between Cdr. Letto and Secretary James Bond covered a wide range of topics, among them expanding partnerships and more contact with Veteran-owned businesses. Ty noted, "I thoroughly enjoyed my discussion with Secretary Bond and am excited about the continued growth of our partnership to improve the lives of Veterans across our state. WDVA is "Making it Count" and truly making a difference in the lives of Veterans every day." *Thank you, Ty.*

Wauwatosa Memorial Underway



Memorial Day 2025 marked the start of the Wauwatosa Veterans Memorial at Hart Park. A collaborative effort of VFW Posts 1465, 6498, 8320, and other community groups, Phase 1 of the Construction will hopefully begin in late summer/early fall. From left: Bill Rheingans, VFW Post 6498; Ben Hruz, VFW Post 1465; Ann Hruz, Consultant; Mike Davis, Architect; JC Moore, VFW Post 6498; Dave Cefalu, VFW Post 1465; Mike Anich, Committee Member; Dennis McBride, Wauwatosa Mayor; Steve McGuire, Contractor; Col. Charles Merkel, Cmdr 128th Air Refueling Wing, Guest Speaker. *Thanks to Alex Kaleta.*

Greendale Day of Service



Greendale VFW Post and Auxiliary 10519 partnered with the Red Cross on May 24 to host a Day of Service at the Zablocki VAMC in Milwaukee. About 175 Veterans on campus enjoyed a classic picnic meal of brats, hamburgers, and a variety of sides prepared by the Red Cross, while Post and Auxiliary 10519 members warmly greeted and assisted Veterans throughout the event. VA staff provided members with bingo games and other lawn activities. Each Veteran in attendance also received a gift of their choice.

Post 10519 SVC Kristin Dodds, who led the effort, in collaboration with Nancy Ustruck of the Auxiliary, the Zablocki VA Volunteer Service Office, and the Red Cross, said, "A strong volunteer team made the day possible, including ten Post members, seven Auxiliary members, and several VFW 4th District Riders. Greendale Scout Troop 506, which is sponsored by the Post, also provided essential help with setting up and taking down equipment. It was a truly meaningful and successful Day of Service—one that brought joy to many Veterans and highlighted the power of community and gratitude." Well done, Greendale! *Thank you, Kristin.*

"Udderly Delightful" in Barron



Members of VFW Post and Auxiliary 8338 helped out at the Barron County 50th annual Dairy Breakfast on June 7. Held on the Kraft Dairy Farm south of Barron the event was a free breakfast open to the public with over 3,500 attendees. Members bussed tables for the morning. Pictured left to right: Post Adjutant Dave Peterson; Auxiliary Pres. Denise Peterson; Auxiliary Sr. Vice Beth Roth; Quartermaster Greg Roth; and Barron American Legion Adjutant Dave Martinson. *Thank you, Greg.*

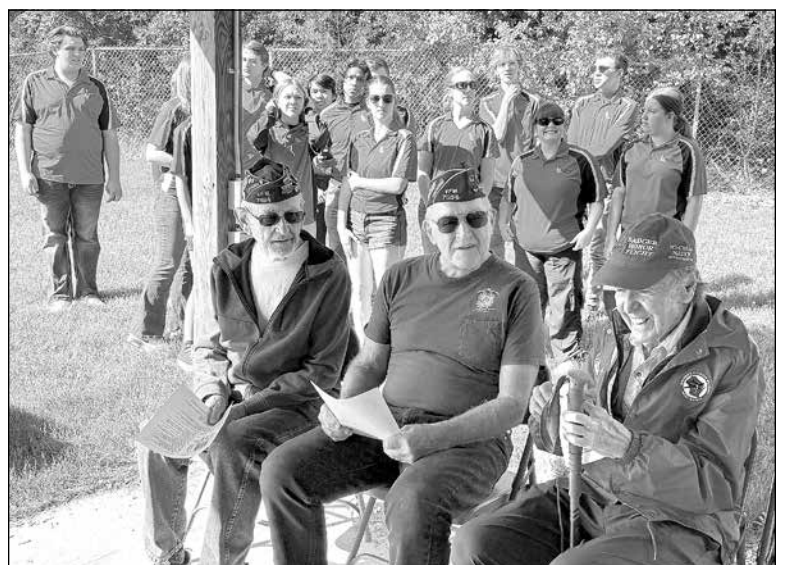
Supporting NOW in Marshfield



Members of Mueller-Hintz Post and Auxiliary 1866 took a turn packing weekend food bags for the Nutrition on Weekends (NOW) Program, spearheaded by the Marshfield United Way. The program provides healthy, ready-to-eat nutritious foods for children during the weekend, providing a food safety net when they are not in the classroom and able to access school meals.

From its start in 2013, serving 29 children in Marshfield, the program served over 600 in ten area communities this past school year. It continues on through the summer months as well. This is an excellent community collaboration to check for in *your* area, whether it's with "man-power", donations or BOTH! *Thanks to Mary Lou Duerr.*

A Special Memorial Day



Memorial Day in Sauk Prairie was extra special this year with three of Lachmund-Cramer Post 7694's Korean War era Veterans in attendance. Seated in front of the Prairie du Sac HS students who sang the national anthem are (from left): Roy Gag, 90, who enlisted in the Navy SeaBees in 1951; Bob Nelson, 93, who enlisted in 1951 in the Air Force as a Paratrooper radio operator; and Frank Haselwander, 94, was drafted in 1951 in the Army and served in the infantry and was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge. *Thank you, Bart Mauch.*

"Lumberjacks" in Clintonville



Members of Post 664 in Clintonville spent all day May 31st cutting down 20 trees, collecting and piling branches, trimming bushes, and raking walking areas for a comrade. The 76-year-old is a U.S. Army, 101st Airborne Veteran, on oxygen and in a wheelchair. *Thank you, Tina Flanagan.*

Tomah Days

September 12-14

Tomah VA Hospital Cookout & Bingo MOC Scratch and MOCA Meeting

Dinner Saturday, Sept. 13
\$15 per person
Payable to: Who? What? Pup Tent 21,
Mail to: Wayne Woodman, 1916 Grumann Dr., Tomah, WI 54660

Make your own reservation at Microtel Inn
115 W. Andres St., Tomah · 608-374-2050
\$99 plus tax, DEADLINE is September 2!

COOTIE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

August 14-17	106th MOC Supreme Scratch and 64th MOCA Convention – Wyndham Hotel & Events Center, Columbus, OH (Visit lotcs.org for registration and info.)
September 12-14	Tomah Days – Hospital Visit and Scratch (See details above!)
October 31- November 2	90th MOC/MOCA Tomb Trek to the Argonne Cross and Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington, VA (Visit lotcs.org for registration and info.)

Cootie Corner

Listen Cooties:
I congratulate Ty Letto on being elected VFW State Commander and wish him and his team a good year this year. I look forward to working with them this year.
I will be starting my Hospital visits in the coming weeks and my Pup Tent visits as well. Thank you Grand Jr. Vice Manny Salas for covering during the State Convention which I could not attend.
Thanks to everyone who has recruited members thus far this year. I hope everyone stays safe and has a joyous summer.

Brian Rickmann
MOC Grand Commander
608-290-2588
bcteb3@gmail.com



Brian Rickmann
WI Grand Commander




Connie Lindloff
MOCA Grand President
262-215-7074
lindloffs@hotmail.com



Keep up the great work you do for all our Veterans in nursing homes and those in and out of the hospital. “Keep them smiling in beds of white.”
Condolences to those who have lost a loved one and get well wishes to those who are ill or suffering in some way. Congrats to those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries. Enjoy your summer!
Connie Lindloff
WI Grand President

MOCA Sisters and Brothers:
Another year is upon us, hope this little note finds everyone safe and healthy. I’ve attended the VFW and Auxiliary State Convention and am planning to attend Supreme Convention in Ohio.
A new year means dues should be paid, once your VFWA dues are in. Please send to Grand Treasurer Dolores Sorensen at 2113 Rainbow Dr., Green Bay, WI 54313. Don’t hold paid dues!
Visits to VA Homes and Hospitals are being scheduled. I am planning on attending all of them. Let’s have another great year!
Our Special Project this year is Stop Soldier Suicide. We invite you to join in the fight with your support as they walk through life’s most difficult moments and guide them on the path of hope and healing. Please consider a donation to our Special Project.
September 12-14, 2025 is Tomah Days. See information at right.



MOC Grand Raffle Tickets Are Available NOW

Tickets are \$2 each or 3/\$5
Seven prizes totaling \$1,000
will be drawn on April 11, 2026
at the WI Grand Convention

For Tickets: Contact MOC Raffle Chair “Twiggy” Johnson
at 920-766-1491 or
wilfredjohnson361@gmail.com



VFW DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN 2026 RAFFLE CALENDAR

Never Forget the Sacrifice
\$28,300 IN TOTAL PRIZES • 365 CHANCES TO WIN

Now on Sale!

Contact your District Commander or State Headquarters to get yours!

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN
RAFFLE CALENDAR
4622 DUTCH MILL ROAD, MADISON, WI 53716-4108
WISCONSIN RAFFLE LIC. NO. R0004509-A-49122
All proceeds will be used for VFW programs supporting Wisconsin Veterans

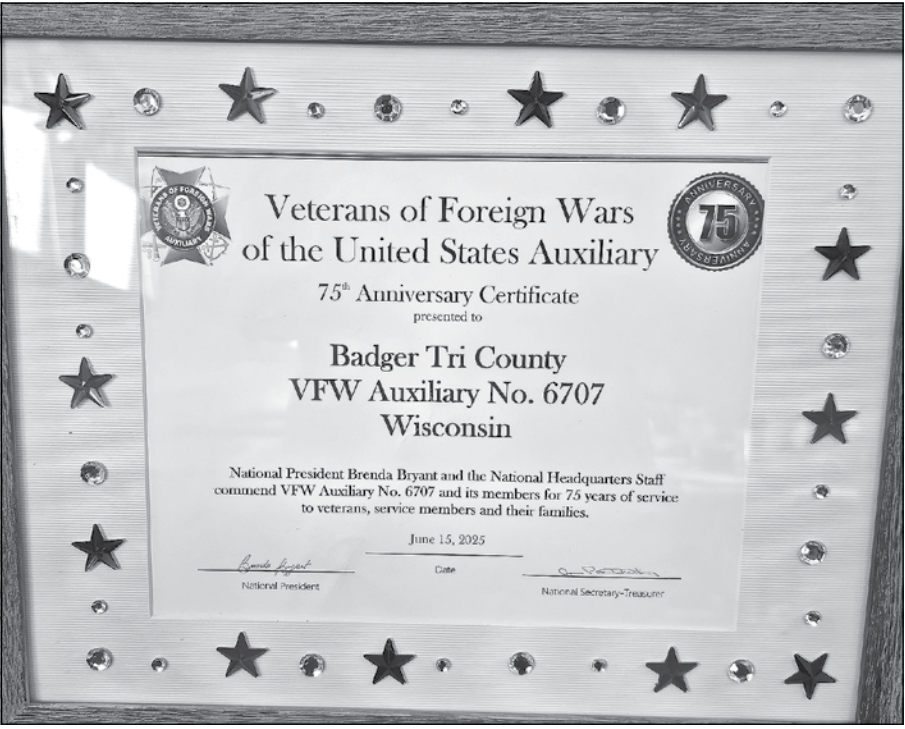
See inside back cover for rules and more information
\$20.00
Prizes: 3 x \$1,000.00 - 10 x \$500.00
4 x \$400.00 - 5 x \$300.00
1 x \$100.00 - 342 x \$50.00
Raffle sales end 12/26/2024

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____ CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE _____

BITS & PIECES

A compendium of things new and noteworthy ...

- Another opportunity to support the **WI VFW NEWS** is inserted in this July/August 2025 issue. Please take action TODAY to return your **2025 Wisconsin NEWS Sweepstakes** tickets and donation to State Headquarters. Your support is GREATLY appreciated!
- **“CHEERS TO 100 YEARS”** for the Department of Wisconsin VFW Auxiliary! Chartered on July 30, 1925, with eight original Auxiliaries, the Department is beginning the year with 100 Auxiliaries and 7,421 members. Watch the **NEWS** and Auxiliary mailings and website for special events and celebrations throughout the year.
- **Check out the great new exhibit at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum: D-DAY, June 6, 1944.** Featuring paintings, select artifacts, stories, and more from the brave Wisconsinites who were there. Free and open to the public, the exhibit runs from July 18 – December 31, 2025, at 30 W. Mifflin St. in Madison. Info at: WISVETSMUSEUM.COM.
- **Don't forget to sign up** for the **R.A.C.E. Suicide Prevention Training** series starting October 28. Get informed. Get Involved. Save a Life. Visit: RACESuicidePrevention.us.
- **CONGRATULATIONS** to Badger Tri-County VFW Auxiliary 6707 in Kiel on your 75th Anniversary. Thank you for all you do for Veterans – we wish you many more years of service! *Photo courtesy of Dept. President Kim McWilliams.*



Where do I find
the VFW Event
Photos on the
Website?

Note: ALL photos of a particular album may be downloaded all at once from the Album Cover using the down arrow. They may also be “shared”.

Suggested credit if you submit these to a publication:
Photo courtesy of Wisconsin VFW State Photographer Sherri L. Smith



- ➔ Open vfwwi.org
- ➔ Click on **ABOUT**
- ➔ Click on **GALLERY**
- ➔ Select **“Click Here to View all Photo Albums on Flickr”**
- ➔ Select Album by name (e.g. **2025 Mid-Winter**)
- ➔ Scroll to a photo you want.
- ➔ **OPEN** it on your computer
- ➔ At the lower right, next to the photo in the black field, click on the **DOWNLOAD ARROW**



Then select the size you want – **SMALL** will be about 40-50 kb, good for electronic display. **ORIGINAL** will be about 2-3 MB, excellent for printing.

FROM THE EDITOR

“If your actions inspire people to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.”
~ John Quincy Adams

By the time you’ve reached this page, you have seen what an outstanding year 2024-2025 was. Congratulations to all who stepped up to honor Mary Ann Christopher-son’s “Journey to Healing Together” year. Once again, this first paper of the year is full of great Convention photo memories, as well as interesting items from around our very busy Department. We hope they **Inform, Inspire, and Invite**. Remember: photos from State events may be found on the VFW State website vfwwi.org. See the information elsewhere on this page.

Thank you Commander Ty Letto for this appointment. I am honored to start my thirteenth year as Editor, promoting the “Make it Count” command year. I know you and your outstanding team will have a productive year with many great accomplishments.

A few special items of note in this issue include:

- The 2025-2026 Commander and President Joint Special Project, **“Campfire for Courage”** on page 13. We’re off to a great start at the Kickoff Weekend. Let’s build on that momentum. And note the Auxiliary’s special event flyer on Page 19 too!

Marla Morgan
Editor



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- **VFW members:** Please take note of the two new fees passed at the 2025 Convention. See below.

- The **2026 VFW Raffle Calendar** (page 16) is another beauty! Make sure you get some to buy AND sell!

I wish you a wonderful rest of the summer and much success as you start a new command year at your Post and Auxiliary. Safe travels always!

~~~~~

Perhaps you sent a card, note or email. Or shared in the June 20 Celebration of Life for Knoot. Or you brought wonderful desserts. Or sent a memorial to honor him with donations to Never Forgotten Honor Flight or UW MIA-RIP. Or you make regular phone calls to me to “check on things”. Whatever you have done, and continue to do, I am humbly and eternally grateful for any and all of it. Keep remembering his laughter and kindness, his life of service, and the stories. Always the stories...♥



**Congratulations Wisconsin, on your eleventh consecutive Grand Award!**

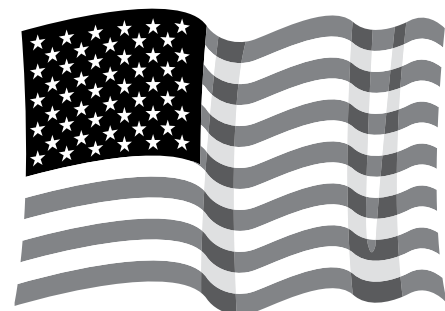
New Dues and Fees  
Recently Enacted

The following **two items** were proposed and passed by vote at the **2025 State Convention**:

- A 50¢ per capita (per member) **Newspaper Fee** to the Posts, due to Department by March 1, 2026. This online payment is based on the Post’s membership total as of **June 30, 2025**.
- A \$3 increase to Department Annual Membership Dues. This has automatically been updated in OMS, and if a Post’s dues were lower than the new total, the total dues for the Post will be automatically increased.

The following **item** was passed at the **June Council of Administration Meeting**:

- A \$10 per Delegate increase in Department Convention Delegate Dues. The new Department Delegate dues are now a \$25 flat fee, **plus** a \$15 per Delegate fee. Each Post gets 1 Delegate per 30 members or part thereof.



Support  
Our  
Troops




Raffle Calendar  
Winners

| Date    | Ticket | Name            | City            | Prize   |
|---------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|
| May 2   | 4155   | A. Holbach      | West Allis      | \$400   |
|         | 2020   | G. Gilbertson   | Brillion        | \$50    |
|         | 11050  | J. Gilbert      | Chetek          | \$50    |
|         | 11297  | J. Pogodzinski  | Thorp           | \$50    |
|         | 425    | J. Juzwiak      | Thorp           | \$50    |
|         | 14178  | F. Albrecht     | Spencer         | \$50    |
|         | 5999   | J. Johnstone    | Cudahy          | \$50    |
| May 9   | 2915   | G. Jurss        | Waukesha        | \$50    |
|         | 3408   | M. Steger       | Hartland        | \$50    |
|         | 4702   | K. Hoff         | Janesville      | \$50    |
|         | 12948  | S. Blake        | Berlin          | \$50    |
|         | 3301   | D. Rupp         | Lowell          | \$50    |
|         | 7547   | T. Neve         | Marshfield      | \$50    |
|         | 12045  | K. Kluge        | Baraboo         | \$50    |
| May 16  | 7871   | L. Romuald      | Shawano         | \$300   |
|         | 948    | C. Flugaur      | Rosholt         | \$50    |
|         | 9948   | T. Fidler       | Mountain        | \$50    |
|         | 501    | L. Allen        | Pardeeville     | \$50    |
|         | 1475   | C. Vosberg      | Hazel Green     | \$50    |
|         | 2799   | T. Nate         | Manitowoc       | \$50    |
|         | 8160   | J. Wilinski     | Little Suamico  | \$50    |
| May 23  | 8876   | B. Wendev       | Iron Mountain   | \$50    |
|         | 767    | C. McAndrew     | Potosi, MI      | \$50    |
|         | 3831   | R. Behnke       | Oregon          | \$50    |
|         | 2798   | M. Fuller       | Sheboygan       | \$50    |
|         | 1065   | A. Kessy        | Cassville       | \$50    |
|         | 1055   | VFW Post 5274   | Platteville     | \$50    |
|         | 13340  | R. Hauptli      | Waterloo        | \$50    |
| May 30  | 3326   | S. Ludwig       | Waterloo        | \$1,000 |
|         | 11237  | S. Delaney      | Chippewa Falls  | \$50    |
|         | 226    | D. Kuehl        | Iron Ridge      | \$50    |
|         | 8305   | V. Van Schyndel | Freedom         | \$50    |
|         | 11827  | R. Hattoon      | Exeland         | \$50    |
|         | 4703   | L. Breeze       | Janesville      | \$50    |
|         | 2394   | L. Dixon        | Dousman         | \$50    |
| June 6  | 9924   | T. Cording      | Peshtigo        | \$50    |
|         | 5881   | M. Smith        | Naples, FL      | \$50    |
|         | 8277   | R. Schefe       | Appleton        | \$50    |
|         | 7523   | B. Verhein      | Marion          | \$50    |
|         | 503    | R. Kiehue       | Pardeeville     | \$50    |
|         | 14360  | L. Abraham      | Random Lake     | \$50    |
|         | 3797   | K. Williams     | Oregon          | \$50    |
| June 13 | 2885   | K. Burr         | Greenfield      | \$50    |
|         | 8757   | M. May          | Appleton        | \$50    |
|         | 2393   | M. Dietz        | Waterford       | \$50    |
|         | 3957   | C. Browning     | Menomonee Fls   | \$50    |
|         | 8093   | S. Langner      | Freedom         | \$50    |
|         | 14347  | J. Musil        | Sheboygan Falls | \$50    |
|         | 11575  | VFW Post 7898   | Woodruff        | \$50    |
| June 20 | 1663   | D. Showers      | Beloit          | \$500   |
|         | 148    | D. Wehr         | Waterville, MN  | \$300   |
|         | 12940  | M. Thull        | Berlin          | \$50    |
|         | 9538   | A. Young        | Hampton, MN     | \$50    |
|         | 8368   | D. Bleck        | Appleton        | \$50    |
|         | 2280   | E. Frederiksen  | Brookfield      | \$50    |
|         | 1913   | S. Klassy       | Mt. Horeb       | \$50    |
| June 27 | 9483   | K. Lemberger    | Two Rivers      | \$50    |
|         | 6873   | D. Wolf         | West Bend       | \$50    |
|         | 4136   | D. Harder       | New Berlin      | \$50    |
|         | 8176   | J. Froh         | Wake Forest, NC | \$50    |
|         | 6572   | A. Baseler      | Ripon           | \$50    |
|         | 6006   | D. Crass        | Franklin        | \$50    |
|         | 3205   | Z. Lemke        | Watertown       | \$50    |

Raffle Winners are also posted on the VFW State Website – [vfwwi.org](http://vfwwi.org) – following the Friday drawings at VFW State Headquarters. On the website home page, click on **NEWS**, then scroll down and click on **VFW RAFFLE CALENDAR NEWS**.

Greetings VFW Family!  
 As this year’s newly appointed VFW National Home Chairman, I would like to thank State Commander Ty Letto for the appointment, and thank him for appointing Randy Engness as Co-Chairman. Rounding out our “team” is Louise Engness as VFW Auxiliary Chairman – thank you to President Kim McWilliams for that appointment too.

Part of our incredible 2024-2025 Command year was another phenomenal time on the annual Bus Trip to the VFW National Home Fall Festival in Eaton Rapids, MI. For those who have taken part in this trip over the years – many of you “repeat customers”- you know what a great time it is. Yes, the ride is a bit long, but the camaraderie and fun make it so very enjoyable. It is nice to spend time with old friends and comrades, and of course, make new friends too. And there are always fun activities on the bus that help us all learn more about the National Home.

Carla  
 McAndrew  
 National Home  
  
 608-763-0042  
[CarlaM@vfwwi.org](mailto:CarlaM@vfwwi.org)



But I think for most participants, the very best part of the trip is the incredible experience that IS the VFW National Home itself. From the awesome campus, to the beautiful homes, the incredible staff and of course the wonderful Veteran families, most of us come away in awe, no matter how many times you’ve visited. It is an inspiration – and yes, a true VFW treasure.

Our VFW National Home District 7 Trustee Michele Rathke is very passionate about the National Home and I thank her for “showing me the ropes” so we can continue to give everyone an awesome experience on the trip. We always have a fun theme and this year is no exception: we have selected “Grease”.

So **MARK YOUR CALENDARS** for **October 24-26, 2025** and watch for the sign-up form and details coming soon. We’d like to have even more participants this year, so make sure you reserve your place for an unforgettable experience! You won’t be sorry! As always, please contact me if you have questions.

EVENTS AND DEADLINES

**NOTE:** Some District Meetings were still not finalized by press time. Please check the VFW and Auxiliary State websites – [vfwwi.org](http://vfwwi.org) and [vfwauxwi.org](http://vfwauxwi.org) respectively – or your District leadership - for updated information.

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| July 31       | <b>Deadline</b> for Post Audits to State Headquarters                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| August 9-13   | <b>VFW/VFWA National Conventions</b> – Columbus, OH                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| August 14-17  | <b>106th MOC Supreme Scratch/64th MOCA Convention</b> – Columbus, OH                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| August 16     | <b>Irreverent Warriors Hike</b> – 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. – The Tap Yard at Schlitz Park, Milwaukee, WI ( <i>Visit: <a href="http://irreverentwarriors.com">irreverentwarriors.com</a> for info.</i> )                                                                         |
| August 18     | <b>Deadline</b> for September/October 2025 <i>Wisconsin VFW News</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| August 21     | <b>VFW Membership Training</b> – 4:00-8:00 p.m. at VFW Post 5716, 17980 W. Beloit Rd., New Berlin, WI 53151                                                                                                                                                                  |
| September 20  | <b>District 1 Meeting</b> – <b>VFW ONLY</b> – 9:30 a.m. – Post 6375, 16 S. Broad St., Elkhorn, WI 53121.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| September 20  | <b>District 2 Meeting</b> – <b>VFW and Auxiliary</b> – 9:00 a.m. (Regis. 8:00 a.m.) – VFW Post 328, 200 Veterans Rd., Stoughton, WI 53589                                                                                                                                    |
| September 20  | <b>District 4 Meeting</b> – <b>Auxiliary ONLY</b> – 9:00 a.m. (Regis. 8:30 a.m.) – Greendale Police Dept., 5911 West Grange Ave., Greendale, WI 53129                                                                                                                        |
| September 20  | <b>District 8 Meeting</b> – <b>VFW and Auxiliary</b> – 11:00 lunch (Regis. 10:00 a.m.) at Coppertown Bar & Grill, 818 Main St., Oconto, WI 54153. <b>Meetings after lunch:</b> <b>VFW</b> at restaurant; <b>AUX</b> at Elks Lodge 887, 310 Farnsworth Ave., Oconto, WI 51453 |
| September 20  | <b>District 11 Meeting</b> – <b>VFW and Auxiliary</b> – 9:00 a.m. (Regis. 8:00 a.m.) – Tentative location: VFW Post 3032, Viroqua                                                                                                                                            |
| September 27  | <b>District 7 Meeting</b> – <b>VFW and Auxiliary</b> – 10:00 a.m. (Regis. 9:00 a.m.) – VFW Post 388, 212 E. Randolph St., Wausau, WI 54401                                                                                                                                   |
| September 27  | <b>District 9 Meeting</b> – <b>Auxiliary ONLY</b> – 10:00 a.m. (Regis. 9:00 am) – VFW Post 305, 1300 Starr Ave., Eau Claire, WI 54703                                                                                                                                        |
| September 27  | <b>District 10 Meeting</b> – <b>VFW ONLY</b> – 9:00 a.m. – location TBD                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| October 4     | <b>District 9 Meeting</b> – <b>VFW ONLY</b> – 10:00 a.m. (Regis. 9:00 a.m.) – hosted by Strum VFW Post 6550 at Eleva-Strum High School, W23597 US Hwy. 10, Strum, WI 54770 <b>Schedule:</b> OTI at 10:00 a.m.; Dist. Mtg. at 1:00 p.m. after lunch.                          |
| October 6     | <b>Deadline</b> for November/December 2025 <i>Wisconsin VFW News</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| DATE TBD      | <b>District 3 Meeting</b> – <b>VFW ONLY</b> –                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| DATE TBD      | <b>District 4 Meeting</b> – <b>VFW ONLY</b> –                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| DATE TBD      | <b>District 6 Meeting</b> – <b>VFW ONLY</b> –                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| DATE TBD      | <b>District 10 Meeting</b> – <b>Auxiliary ONLY</b> –                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| October 17-19 | <b>2025 Big Ten Conference</b> – Isle Casino Hotel & Quad Cities Waterfront Convention Center, Bettendorf, IA ( <i>Visit: <a href="http://vfwia.org">vfwia.org</a> for Registration forms and Hotel information – deadline is August 31.</i> )                               |
| October 24-26 | <b>Bus Trip to the VFW National Home</b> – watch <a href="http://vfwwi.org">vfwwi.org</a> for reservation form and details!                                                                                                                                                  |
| November 15   | <b>Fall Council of Administration Meetings</b> – <b>VFW</b> – Black River Falls; <b>AUX</b> – Beaver Dam. Watch <a href="http://vfwwi.org">vfwwi.org</a> and <a href="http://vfwauxwi.org">vfwauxwi.org</a> for details!                                                     |



Stories From  
*The Final Bridge*



**A bridge from their name on the  
Vietnam Veterans Memorial  
to their final resting place**  
By Steve Conto

THE BOOK CORNER

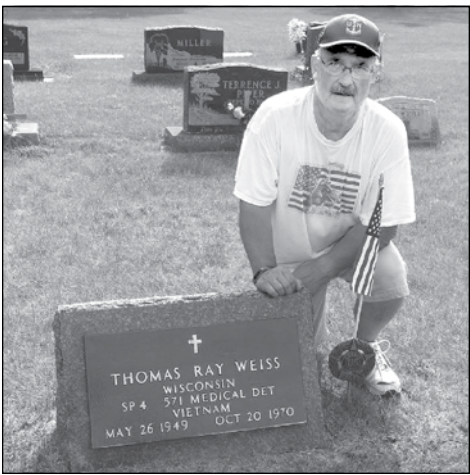
*Stories From  
The Final Bridge*  
by Steve Conto

This book is the product of a personal legacy project started in the Spring of 2002 to locate the exact burial location of those individuals from Wisconsin who were killed in the Vietnam War. *To create a bridge from their name on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C., to their final resting place.* Each burial site is recorded on a spreadsheet, including section, row, and column in order to pinpoint the exact location so families, comrades, and friends can easily find our departed heroes. That spreadsheet is archived with, and in use by, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, The Highground Veterans Memorial, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, among others.

Many of us are familiar with VFW Life Member Steve Conto either through the organization or perhaps his replica Vietnam Wall or this tremendous project. In the author's words:

*"My reason for sharing my stories in this book is simple: to remember them and their sacrifice, to let people know about their families, friends and comrades. I've always said, 'It may be fifty years since they left us, but it will always be fifty minutes to those who held them dear.' They should never be forgotten and we must remember the price of our freedom comes at the highest cost. They were just like you and me, with the same hopes, the same dreams, and the same desire for a long life. All tragically taken too soon."*

To date, Steve has logged over 20,000 miles, visiting 1,198 burial sites, all over the



Steve Conto

country, with 26 more to go. He accepts no monetary support for the project, considering it his great honor to do this work. He states,

*"To all the heroes I've searched for, there are no words to express my gratitude in getting to know you, your friends and families. You were Wisconsin's finest and we were blessed to have had you for that short time. We are at a loss to all that was taken from us by your absence. I wish that I never had to say thank you for your ultimate sacrifice."*

*"Stories From The Final Bridge"* is available on Amazon.com for \$20 plus tax and shipping. Steve hopes to have a book signing at the Highground in the future, and we will relay that info when it is scheduled. Congratulations, comrade, and thank you for YOUR service, then and now.

Partners in Success Pins  
Available Soon

*Editor's note: Here's a wonderful story, right from Post and Auxiliary 2113 in De Pere and District 8, sent from Post 2113 QM Randy Hansen:*

"I've attached a picture of the "VFW and Auxiliary Partners in Success" flag/lapel pin that VFW Post 2113 created last year to help celebrate the partnership that our Post has with our Auxiliary. Without that partnership, we would not have received our Post's first ever All-American Award in 2024. Yes, I'm the guy that designed this new pin, but Post 2113 and 8th District members all took a hand in refining the "Partners in Success" message to what you see on the pin today."

Randy continues, "Of additional interest, I've been talking with Hank Ellis, VFW Director of Supply and Logistics. The Staff at VFW HQ was so impressed with the pin and its message that they have adopted it as a National VFW Pin. Per Hank: 'The pin will be available for purchase at the VFW National Convention and beyond that; it'll be included in the September 1, 2025 edition of the VFW Supply Catalog.'"

Further, "Its catalog supply number is #1763, under the title of "VFW/AUX Partners in Success Lapel Pin", with a price of \$5.00 per pin, plus shipping and handling. If VFW Posts wish to order the new pin prior to the catalog coming out, they can by calling VFW Supply (888-839-8387) and placing a special order for it. The new pin will not be online until the September 1 Catalog is published; so at this point, calling is the only way to order it."

District 8 Chief-of-Staff Bruce Sorensen noted, "The VFW Auxiliary is a very important part of our Veterans of Foreign Wars Organization. The Posts that are fortunate enough to have an Auxiliary, which our Post 7534 has, know how helpful and supportive they are as we work together for the benefit of Veterans, their families and the community." Congratulations to Post 2113 and District 8 on this success! Sherri L. Smith photo.



We Rise by Lifting Others

You Are Invited

**PRESIDENT'S PROJECT  
VISIT TO THE HIGHGROUND**

**VETERAN AND FAMILIES RETREAT WEEKENDS  
PTSD AND SUICIDE SUPPORT**

Join us for a visit to The Highground, Neillsville, WI.  
Learn about the President's Project, tour the facilities,  
and enjoy a little lunch before your trip home.

Date: **09-13-2025**  
Location: **W7031 W Ridge Rd,  
Neillsville, WI, 54456**  
Time: **10:00 am**  
RSVP by **September 1, 2025**  
RSVP to : **Jennifer Mauritz jmauritz922@gmail.com**  
Lunch Provided by: **Mueller-Hintz VFWA Post 1866, Marshfield**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Aux # \_\_\_\_\_

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





★ ★ ★ ★ 2025 Convention Memories ★ ★ ★ ★



LEFT: This year's Joint Special Project, "A Journey to Healing" raised a whopping \$49,461.21 to establish a Fund for Mental Health grants within the WI VFW Foundation. Word has it if it HAD been a "competition", the VFW would have "won" this year! With the big check are Cdr. Ron Ramos; Foundation Sec/Treas. Renee Simpson; and Aux. Pres. Cheryl Woodards. RIGHT: 2023-2024 Aux. Dept. President Sherrie Rosenau and VFW State Cdr. Ron Ramos display bound volumes of the WI VFW NEWS from their year, presented by NEWS Chairman Renee Simpson at the Joint Awards Program.



LEFT: VFW Assistant Adjutant General Brian Walker addresses the Friday Banquet attendees. CENTER: Auxiliary National Chaplain Kim Harney shares her message at the Banquet. RIGHT: VFW State Officers ponder the remarks given by WDVA Secretary James Bond during a business session.



LEFT: A number of personalized tributes in honor of Mary Ann Christopherson were presented to Roy Christopherson. RIGHT: A good showing of women Veterans attended the first-ever Women Veterans' Breakfast held on Friday morning. The fascinating keynote speaker was U.S. Army Veteran Linda "Sister Sarge" McClenahan (center), who joined the Dominican Sisters nearly 30 years after her tour of duty in Vietnam.



LEFT: The usual mayhem and mirth ensued during the annual PDP skit inducting the outgoing President Cheryl Woodards "into the fold". She was "up the creek without a paddle", but fortunately found it in time to be voted in successfully. RIGHT: A very-well attended Military and Funeral Honors Training conducted by WDVA included both a PowerPoint discussion and hands-on Flag Folding instruction.

Sherri L. Smith  
photos.