



NEWS 2026



VOL. 43 NO. 5

MAKE IT COUNT

MARCH/APRIL 2026

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

The annual VFW Washington Conference, (FKA the VFW Legislative Conference) is, as they say, “where the rubber meets the road”. Or in the case of this year, where the week’s events saw many, many wonderful highs, and one huge, disappointing low.

Utilizing the weekend before the Conference for business of the National Council of Administration and other Committees, the activity really ramped up on Monday with briefings for all attendees and the start of Capitol Hill visits to Legislators. A new activity on Monday evening – complete with much lower temps and light snow – was the Re-enactment of the March of the Bonus Army. (See page 15.)

Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore’s Testimony before the Joint House and Senate VSO Hearing was exceptional. And then the “roller coaster” took a steep dive. After the hearing, Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) went to the Senate floor to move for unanimous consent, to pass



The Wisconsin Delegation is ready and raring to go at the Hart Senate Office Building. Adam Wallace photo.

the Major Richard Star Act. Unfortunately, Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI) rose to object and blocked a vote. A devastating blow to all Veterans, especially those witnessing

it, including the Wisconsin Delegation, and we suspect, the 77 Senate Co-Sponsors of the Bill.

Stay tuned. Our Legislative Teams at

National and Department levels will keep us apprised. In the meanwhile, please see more coverage of Wisconsin’s “Advocacy in Action” on pages 10 and 15.

Honors at Arlington

The Saturday wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery is always a moving reminder of why we are still serving, advocating for those who have given so much.



ABOVE: Cdr. Ty Letto and Pres. Kim McWilliams salute the wreath following placement at the Tomb. Photo © Jeff Thorne Photography / Headshots Today – we are very grateful to Mr. Thorne for sharing his incredible photography with us!

AT LEFT: The ribbons stayed still just long enough for Comrade Tina Flanagan of Post 664 to catch this beautiful shot. Thank you Tina!

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**FORWARD TOGETHER:
FINISHING THE YEAR STRONG
FOR WISCONSIN'S VETERANS**

As State Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I continue to be inspired by the **strength, commitment, and purpose** of our members across the state. In recent weeks, I've had the honor of visiting several Districts and Posts, witnessing firsthand the **momentum driving our organization forward** and what it means to truly "Make it Count in the lives of Veterans every day".

From District 7 to District 3, and District 8 to District 4, I've seen **exceptional leadership, strong membership growth, and a deep commitment to our mission**. District Commanders and Post leaders are setting the standard with efficient, engaging meetings, meaningful recognition of achievement, and a growing use of technology that helps us communicate faster, track membership, and share our story more effectively. It's been a privilege to present membership T-shirts to recruiters and Commander's Coins to Post leaders who have reached 101% membership, recognizing those who continue to

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strengthen our ranks and amplify our voice for Veterans and their families.

Our youth programs are a shining example of the VFW's impact. Participating in Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen ceremonies and honoring Teachers of the Year reinforces the importance of **investing in the next generation**. The patriotism and talent of these young Americans give me tremendous confidence in the future of our nation and show why these programs remain central to our mission.

Our advocacy is strong. Recently, with State Legislative Chairman Jordan Tilleson, I testified before the Wisconsin Assembly Committee

on Military and Veterans Affairs, in support of **key legislation for Veterans**. These bills honor our promises, bring missing service members home, recognize the sacrifices of our Guard and Reserve, and ensure Veterans are treated with dignity. When we speak with **one unified voice**, lawmakers listen, and with the strength of over 30,000 VFW and Auxiliary members behind us, we will continue **holding leaders like Assembly Speaker Robin Vos accountable**, to ensure Wisconsin keeps its commitment to those who served.

I've also witnessed the incredible **generosity and camaraderie** of our Posts and Districts. Members lead by example, sponsoring Veterans and families through Campfire for Courage, hosting community luncheons, and supporting one another. From Post 2895 in Cudahy to other Posts reaching 101% membership, these actions show the heart of what we do. **Veterans supporting Veterans: that's not just what we say, it's who we are.**

YOU are not only **growing our ranks and hitting every benchmark**, but **YOU** are also **making a real difference** in the lives of Veterans and their families. Through Campfire

for Courage, Posts, Districts, corporations, and individuals are going above and beyond to sponsor Veterans and families, while our membership growth strengthens our voice and advocacy mission.

This momentum is real and belongs to every member who chooses to step forward and lead. **I challenge each of YOU:**

- Recruit one more member.
- Sponsor one more Veteran or family member.
- Stay fully engaged in the work that defines who we are.

When we take these steps together, we don't just meet our goals, we **shatter them**. We don't just support Veterans; we **transform their lives**. We don't just serve; we **lead, inspire, and make a lasting impact** across Wisconsin and beyond.

THIS IS YOUR CALL TO ACTION. THIS IS OUR MOMENT. Together, we will finish this program year strong, exceed every expectation, and continue to **Make it Count** for every Veteran, every family, and every community we serve. **Let's Make it Count, Wisconsin!**

VFW DAY OF SERVICE

Be a part of the **5th Annual Day of Service** that kicks off on May 2, 2026 and runs until May 31, 2026. Look at the needs of your community and make it yours!

This is an opportunity for us to work together with our communities and make a difference in lives of those who support us. No matter how big or small the event might be, together we can make a meaningful impact and demonstrate that the VFW with the support of our Auxiliary, is truly #StillServing.

**Renee L.
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Not sure where to start? The VFW Day of Service Resources can be a great place to

start the process. Visit <https://todaysvfw.org/vfw-day-of-service-resources/> for a place to start. Whether you're organizing a food drive, hosting a blood drive or a community service event, these resources provide assistance to ensure a seamless planning process. You can also reach out to your municipalities to see what assistance they need in your community.

If you have never participated in the VFW Day of Service before, look at an event that would align with a project that your Post already does and expand on it. Dive into the toolkit and let the VFW help you turn your event ideas into impactful actions.

The **Day of Service** is a chance to embody the spirit of community and service that defines the VFW. As we approach the end of the VFW 2025 - 2026 year, let's rekindle the flames of passion and commitment to one another. Let's rally together, embrace new challenges, and carry the torch of excellence as we close this membership year with echoing applause. #MakeItCount

Register your Day of Service event at <https://todaysvfw.org/day-of-service/>. **NOTE:** "Buddy"® Poppy Drives; recruiting; and events which raise monetary donations do **NOT** qualify as a Day of Service event.



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**"The HQ
Dispatch"**
Greetings Comrades,

Thank you to everyone who attended the Mid-Winter Conference. All members who participated in the meetings, training sessions, Red Carpet activities, and the Voice of Democracy/Patriot's Pen Awards Banquet did an outstanding job. Very few issues were reported, which is a testament to the professionalism and dedication of our volunteers and staff.

That said, we owe an apology to our Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen sponsors for not ensuring that formal photos were taken with the sponsored place winners. Without our sponsors, this event would not be possible. To each of you, thank you for your continued support. We will ensure that formal photos are taken next year.

• WI VFW NEWS

The Wisconsin VFW NEWS remains a communication tool for reaching our membership. The \$0.50 per member fee, approved at the 2025 State Convention, helps offset the cost of producing the newspaper. More than 50% of the total cost is postage alone. Each printed issue is currently mailed to more than 22,000 recipients. The continuation of this fee will be a pivotal piece of the Newspaper budget and in part may help decide how many editions and what size paper is possible for the 2026-2027 year. In the meantime, please consider becoming a NEWS Booster. Sponsorship information is included elsewhere in this edition and is also available on the State website.

• AUDITS

At present, Audits are being emailed to five different addresses as well as mailed to State Headquarters. The Assistant Adjutant/Quartermaster is monitoring three of these email accounts, which makes tracking and processing Audits time-consuming and inefficient. To streamline this process, we need to reduce submissions to two methods:

1. **Preferred:** Email Audits to audits@vfwwi.org. Please do not send them to any other email address at State Headquarters.
2. Snail mail Audits to State Headquarters.

• ELECTIONS

It is once again time to begin the election process:

March Meeting: Open nominations for all elected positions. Nominations remain open until the April meeting.

April Meeting: Conduct the second round of nominations, then hold elections for Officers and Delegates.

After elections are completed:

Submit your Election Report online through the **National website**.

Submit your Department Delegate Election Report and dues payment through the **State website**. (This form will be available about **April 3, 2026**.)

NOTE: All Election Reports and required yearly Post Delegate dues payments are due by April 30, 2026.

Finally, we would like to thank all our Comrades for everything you do to support Veterans, their families, and your communities. Your continued dedication keeps our mission strong.

Greetings Comrades!

I have a quick question for you: "Who does more for Veterans?" That's right, "WE DO!"

How do we know that we do more for Veterans you might ask? The answer is in the numbers, lots and lots of numbers. Although it seems we are always emphasizing membership, we also rely on the data/information provided in Community Activity Reports (CAR), which shows our relevance in our neighborhoods and communities.

I would like to quote the VFW guide for Community Service Best Practices: "**People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.**" **The VFW and its Auxiliary's ability to impact Veterans, youth, political issues, patriotism, civic pride, volunteerism and almost anything you can name, is directly dependent upon our Posts being recognized as caring and involved participants in their Communities.**"

As with any major for-profit and/or not-for-profit (hello...us) organization, we too rely on numbers! The information - data and numbers - you or your Post provide each time you complete a Community Activities Report. Our impact on the community is immeasurable, and I see it every day when I log on and review the dashboard. As the Chairman of the Community Activity Committee, I also review, approve, or disapprove your submissions.

Comrades, the review of your submitted CARs is to "**ensure proper recognition for our members, and to help showcase our hard work and dedication to the public.**" Since 1899, Community Service has been a cornerstone of the VFW and reporting the millions of hours our members spend each year is important. Now that I review CARs, I've noticed that some Posts may not be fully aware of the requirements needed for a report to be approved. The following are the most common errors:

1. **Timeliness** - the Community Service year is from July 1 - June 30 annually, and events should be reported 365 days a year, not weekly, monthly or quarterly. We will not approve a report if it is outside of these dates of the current command year.

2. **Reporting** - VFW Community Service hours must be performed by and as a representative of, the VFW and to impact a broad spectrum of the local community. The work must also be performed for an organization outside of the VFW and its Auxiliary. In addition, efforts performed for the sole benefit of the Post or Auxiliary are not considered Community Service. Things such as maintenance, upkeep, or beautification of the Post home; cooking or serving a meal for a Post fund raiser; or working on Bingo night where the money is kept by the Post. Also, efforts that are part of the normal requirements of a Post or Auxiliary, such as: flying the American flag or the POW flag; conducting Flag retirements (unless it is part of an educational event); placing Flags on graves; hosting bingo; Post dinners; "Buddy"® Poppy Drives; to name a few. **NOTE:** A particularly controversial area is service to one's church. Generally, this is not considered Community Service for two reasons: It is not performed for the community at large; and it is part of an individual's service to their faith and not the VFW. However, if your Chaplain is conducting bible study for shut-in Veterans, I'll give it a thumbs up!

3. **Value of Volunteer Hours** - no matter what kind of volunteer work you do, it contributes in invaluable ways!

4. **Value of a Mile** - every year the IRS issues standard mileage rates for charitable work.

5. **Total Impact** - the VFW analyzes the total impact of your Community Service event(s) by calculating the money you spent, and the total hours and miles of all participating VFW and Auxiliary members spent executing the event. The easiest way to remember this is: **\$ + Hours + Mileage = Total Impact!**

I want to commend each one of you for the hard work that you do every day for Veterans and for your community. I know you and your Post are out there doing - all I ask is that you report your outstanding work by submitting a **Community Activity Report (CAR)** as soon as you are done.

P.S.: the VFW Guide For Community Service Best Practices is located on the Department website (vfwwi.org) - just log in under the **Members Only** link, then go to **Programs**, then scroll down to **Community Activities**.

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State Jr. Vice
Commander**


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Comrades,

Recently I was selling raffle tickets for our organization at work when a coworker mentioned they didn't know that I had served. I gave them the quick once-over — branch and years of service — the standard short version many of us default to. That simple exchange led to follow-up questions and more conversations throughout the week about my time in uniform. As I talked, I found myself mentally walking back through those years.

I shared a few stories — some serious, some humorous — and got that familiar “deer in the headlights” look when I mentioned a couple of the more ridiculous moments that only make sense if you've lived them. The kind of stories that start with “You won't believe this...”

I'm proud of my time in service, and I'm grateful that eighteen-year-old me made the decision to join the Army. That choice shaped the person I am today. It taught me resilience, responsibility, and the importance of standing shoulder to shoulder with others when things get difficult. It gave me lifelong friendships and memories that still influence how I see the world.

But our story didn't end when we hung up the uniform. As members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we continue to build new chapters. We continue to fight — not on foreign soil, but here at home — for our fellow Veterans, for their families, and for the communities we live in. Our mission remains clear: to ensure that no Veteran is left behind, now or in the future.

We advocate for legislation that ensures our government fulfills its promises to those who served. We support programs that assist Veterans navigate healthcare, benefits, and transition challenges. We show up in our communities — hosting events, supporting youth programs, honoring the fallen, and lending a hand wherever it's needed. Sometimes the work is visible and public. Other times it's quiet and personal — a phone call, a hospital visit, a conversation over coffee when someone needs it most.

Just like our time in service, the moments that matter most aren't always the ones that make headlines. They're the small acts of commitment and camaraderie that remind us why we stepped forward in the first place.

If someone were to ask today what it means to be part of the VFW, I would tell them this: it means continuing to serve. It means honoring the past while actively shaping the future. It means carrying forward the bond we formed in uniform and using it to strengthen our communities.

I'm proud of my service. I'm proud of the stories — the serious ones and the ridiculous ones alike. And I'm proud to stand alongside each of you as a member of this organization.

Nick Webster
Judge Advocate



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Greetings fellow Wisconsinites,

I hope all are doing well. It was great seeing everyone in Appleton at Mid-Winter. We had a great turnout for the VOD/PP and TOY Banquet. Congrats to all the Posts and Auxiliaries that participated with such strong candidates.

Fifty-nine Posts have met or exceeded the 101% Membership Goal already - that is 21 more since our last issue. Thirty-two Posts are at 100%, knocking on the door to the goal. That is excellent! Let's keep up the momentum.

Commanders and Quartermasters: I hope you are looking at the Program Book because I heard more than a few times over Mid-Winter on how not reading the requirements closely eliminated some Commanders and Quartermasters. There is still some time to review the qualifications for All-State, but don't delay!

This was my first time participating in the Washington Conference, seeing how the process works and getting to meet and talk with my Representatives. It was great to be a part of the strong Delegation advocating for Veterans.

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Chief-of-Staff



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State Convention is not all that far off. Hotel and Registration info is posted on the state website and elsewhere in this issue of the NEWS. Calling early is better than being too late and being sent to an alternate Hotel which would require some travel inconvenience, so get your reservation in. You can cancel with no penalty a week out if needed.

Ty's Commander shirts are still available - if you're interested, please reach out to me directly. Thank you for all you continue to do to “Make it Count”.

Comrades:

I hope that you read my article in the last *Wisconsin VFW News* online at vfwwi.org and have been trying to track down members of your Post who may have undeliverable addresses. It's important that all your members keep informed about Post, Department and National news that may benefit them.

This month it's time to talk about your Post Bylaws. Say what?! Yes, every Post is required to have Bylaws pursuant to Article II, sec. 202 of the National Bylaws. This is a relatively new requirement and is separate from the ones enacted by the District, Department and National Organizations.

At the Mid-Winter Conference, District 6 Commander Robert Buehler submitted a summary review of the inspections in his District and one point made was that 100% of the Posts in District 6 have Bylaws. Fantastic, I thought, and then began to wonder how many other Districts are that far along. This would be difficult to determine accurately at this time, but I am certain that many Posts do not have Bylaws yet and some of those that do, have ancient ones needing an update.

Fortunately, there is a Post Bylaws template on the **Members Only Page** at the state website vfwwi.org. [LOGIN is at the upper right of the home page.] The template is in Microsoft Word format and can be modified to suit your Post's individual needs. As long as your Post Bylaws do not conflict with District, State and National Bylaws, you may enact sections that are important to regulate your Post activities. Certain sections in the standard template may be altered or even deleted if they don't apply. Some examples:

- The need for a House Committee and/or other Committees not utilized by your Post.
- Make sure that you don't make things too restrictive such as including an exact time and day of month for meetings. In my Post's Bylaws we stated that meetings would be held as per our April election report as approved by the membership.
- Regarding elected and appointed Officers, certain ones must be elected and appointed, but other positions such as Surgeon and Judge Advocate can be specified as optional, appointed or elected.

You must notify all your Post members 20 days prior to the meeting at which you plan to vote on Bylaws adoption, and it must pass by a two-thirds vote. So, take attendance and record the voting results in the minutes.

Lastly, submit the completed document (on paper or preferably as a Word document) to State Headquarters for review and they will forward it to National HQ for review and approval if acceptable. There are no fees for all this, and official copies will be returned to you.

Once you have developed or updated your Post Bylaws, you'll realize that it was not a difficult task at all!

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State Inspector



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Spring Into Readiness: Protecting Your Health During Wisconsin's Mud Season

As Spring arrives in Wisconsin, Veterans know the shift well: snow melts, temperatures swing, and “mud season” sets in. While the change signals longer days and renewed outdoor activity, it also brings unique health considerations. For Veterans across the Badger State, spring is an ideal time to reset physical and mental readiness.

First, fluctuating temperatures and lingering ice increase fall risk. Veterans with prior musculoskeletal injuries, especially knee, ankle, or back conditions, should use supportive footwear with traction and avoid uneven, thawing terrain. If you receive care through the VA, consider scheduling a spring musculoskeletal check-in to reassess pain management or mobility goals before summer activity ramps up.

Second, Wisconsin's spring thaw contributes to mold exposure and seasonal allergies. Increased sinus congestion, coughing, or asthma exacerbation are common. Veterans with respiratory conditions should review inhaler techniques, refill medications early, and monitor air quality reports. If you use CPAP equipment, spring is a good time to replace filters and clean tubing to reduce allergen exposure.

Angela Thomsen
State Surgeon



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Mental health deserves equal attention. The transition from winter isolation to increased social expectations can be challenging. If you've noticed persistent low mood, irritability, or sleep disruption, reach out early. Wisconsin VA facilities and community-based outpatient clinics offer confidential mental health services, telehealth options, and peer support programs. Finally, take advantage of improving weather. Even 20–30 minutes of brisk walking several times per week can improve cardiovascular health, reduce joint stiffness, and enhance mood.

Spring in Wisconsin is unpredictable, but your health plan doesn't have to be. Use this season to recommit to prevention, mobility, and connection. Until next time, stay happy and healthy!

Wisconsin VFW News Production Schedule

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

Department Convention • June 10-13, 2026

Planning for Upcoming Meetings

- **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
Stoney Creek Hotel • \$110 + taxes
3060 S. Kinney Coulee Rd., Onalaska, WI 54650 • 608-781-3060
- **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.

Wisconsin VFW News

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Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars

A GOOD Veteran

Comrades,

It was a blessing to see so many familiar faces gathered at Mid-Winter. Walking through those halls, giving hugs, sharing stories, I was struck by the unmistakable warmth in the room. There was laughter, yes, but also something deeper: a shared reverence for service and a visible love for Veterans that crossed generations, Posts, and Districts. In a time when much of the world feels hurried and divided, Mid-Winter felt grounded, intentional, and profoundly human.

As State Chaplain, I am often asked where I find hope. This year, I found it there, among comrades who understand that service does not end when the uniform comes off. It simply changes its shape.

I was reminded of a passage that has stayed with me, one that speaks directly to the heart of who Veterans are and who they are called to become: *"A harmless Veteran is not a good Veteran. A good Veteran is a very, very dangerous person who has that under voluntary control."* At first reading, the words can unsettle. But sit with them long enough, and they reveal a deep truth, one that cultures across history have understood instinctively.

Veterans are shaped by a warrior temperament. This is not something to fear or suppress; it is something to honor and discipline. Strength without restraint can be destructive, but strength guided by character becomes a force for good. When that warrior spirit is brought under voluntary control, integrated into one's character, it produces something rare and precious: a person who is stalwart, dependable, and unyielding in the face of risk. Someone who moves forward when others hesitate. Someone who stands watch so others may rest.

This, to me is a spiritual calling. Discipline is not merely a military concept; it is a moral one. It is the daily choice to use

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State Chaplain


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strength in service of others, to channel power toward compassion, justice, and protection of the vulnerable. Veterans know this path well, even if they do not always name it as such. They live it in their families, their communities, and their Posts.

By the time you read this, the State Legislative Session will have concluded. But our work, our fight, continues. Madison remains a place where the future of Veterans' benefits, care and recognition is shaped, often quietly, sometimes imperfectly, but always influenced by those willing to show up.

I am encouraged by what I am seeing. Posts and Districts are becoming more engaged. Relationships with representatives are being formed and strengthened. These connections are not built overnight. They are forged through steady contact, respectful dialogue, and persistence. Every phone call, every meeting, every shared story expands our sphere of influence. Each one matters. Advocacy, like service, is an act of faith. Faith that our voices matter. Faith that relationships grow with time. Faith that disciplined strength, applied consistently, can shape outcomes for the better.

To all of you: Thank you. Thank you for what you do for Veterans you know, and for those you will never meet. Thank you for the quiet acts of service that go unrecognized and the steady leadership that keeps our mission moving forward. I see you. I appreciate you. And I am grateful to walk alongside you in the service of others.

Greetings all comrades –

The Service Office Team and I hope all that attended this year's Mid-Winter Conference had a good time, and for the rest of the WI VFW family, we hope this year is starting out right for all of you. I know that it goes without saying the team and I are working hard to make sure that the Veterans and their families are being served and represented to the utmost degree of diligence and professionalism.

To update all the happenings at your friendly neighborhood Service Office:

This most recent Government shutdown has not affected us at this point because the VA is fully funded. However, keep in mind that there are brothers and sisters out there that are struggling due to these shutdowns.

I do appreciate any questions that you all might have regarding benefits and how to obtain them, so if there is something you, the VFW membership would like to ask, please do so.

For instance, I have been asked what to do if trying to get a Veteran's records that have been affected by the fire of 1973 at the Record Management Center (RMC) in St. Louis. The first thing I would like to make clear is if this is the case, please make sure to still request these records because there are recovery actions still taking place. [Please see the section below.]

It is also important to know that working with either our office or your local CVSO, make sure every possible action has been taken to try and get what you can. Because this always makes this process easier for all parties involved.

DID YOU KNOW...?

On July 12, 1973, a fire broke out in the National Personnel Records Center at 9700 Page Avenue in St. Louis, MO. It destroyed approximately 16–18 million Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs). In the scramble to put out the fire, First Responders doused the building. The main fire took four days to control. Hot-spots lasted about a month.

The Veterans' records most affected were of US Army, Army Air Force, and Air Force personnel. The fire destroyed more than three-quarters of these documents. These records are critical to support Veterans seeking benefits, like health care, home loans, and military funerals.

Staff came together swiftly to identify and preserve alternate sources. After the fire, the RMC personnel literally froze the records in ice, to eventually try to save what they could of these records. Which means it could be possible some of the records can be saved and now made available.

Because of the actions taken immediately after the fire, especially regarding identifying, collecting, and indexing other record series that could be used to verify service, they are normally able to reconstruct basic service and issue a document which can be used in lieu of a separation document (DD Form 214) to secure benefits. Reconstruction technicians have been successful in reconstructing details of service, despite the loss of the personnel files, for 5.5 million Veterans. To this day, staff in St. Louis work with the surviving records—known as the B-files—to ensure that Veterans, their families, and other researchers can access the information they need—sometimes urgently.

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STATE OFFICERS

Comrades,

I am honored to share an important **Campfire for Courage** milestone with you! Through the collective efforts of VFW Posts, Districts, Auxiliaries, community partners, and individual supporters, Campfire for Courage has raised enough funds to sponsor 171 **Veterans or family members** to attend a healing retreat.

This achievement represents more than a financial benchmark. It reflects 171 opportunities to strengthen Veteran-to-Veteran connections, reduce isolation, and reinforce family support systems. At a time when mental health challenges among Veterans continue to demand attention, **Campfire for Courage** offers a practical, mission-focused approach that complements the VFW's longstanding advocacy and outreach efforts.

The impact of this milestone would not be possible without the leadership and engagement of the VFW at every level. Post fundraisers, District coordination, Department visibility, and Auxiliary support have all played a critical role in expanding access to these retreats. The success demonstrates what can be accomplished when the Veteran community unites behind a shared purpose.

While this milestone is worth celebrating, the mission continues. I challenged everyone at the Council of Administration

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Haumschild**
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to not "smell the barn," to keep fundraising to see just how many Veterans and adult family members we can help! I want to extend my sincere appreciation to the Department, Districts, Posts, and Auxiliaries for their continued partnership and leadership. Together, we are ensuring that support for Veterans does not end with their service—and that no Veteran or family member has to face challenges alone.

We are planning a pilot retreat this summer - no dates have been set, but we want to know who is interested. Please send any nominations to me, include names, ages, and a brief write up no more than one paragraph of why we should choose the nominee for the pilot. I will start building a roster of people who have interest, and if you are not part of the pilot, you will be on the list for 2027.

WISCONSIN VFW FOUNDATION UPDATE

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

Grant Applications are now being accepted for consideration at the annual VFW State Convention in June. All materials must be received by the Foundation Secretary, either by email or regular mail, **by May 15, 2026, NO EXCEPTIONS**. A complete narrative of the necessary information, along with the required application form can be found at on the State VFW website at vfwwi.org, or by request from the Foundation Secretary-Treasurer.

We are now also accepting applications for the **2026 Wisconsin VFW Foundation Mentorship Grant**. This grant is for mentors within the VFW that are providing outstanding support to other VFW members with mentorship. This award goes directly to the "mentor" to award their efforts for the betterment of the VFW. Two grants will be awarded based on input from the 2025-2026 Foundation Board Members.

The application form is also available on the State VFW website at vfwwi.org, or by request from the Foundation Secretary. **Again, the deadline is also May 15, 2026, NO EXCEPTIONS.**

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

The mailing address is: WI VFW Foundation, PO Box 242, Camp Douglas, WI 54618 Completed applications may also be emailed to: wivfwfoundation@gmail.com.

Renee Simpson
Sec./Treas.

WI VFW Foundation

608-343-3906
wivfwfoundation
@gmail.com



**For all WI VFW Foundation
forms and info,
VISIT:
vfwwi.org
Click on PROGRAMS,
then
VFW FOUNDATION - GRANTS**



MEMBERSHIP

Current Membership Totals By District

Dist.	Life	New	Reinstate	Continuous	Total	Adj. Prior Year	Percentage
1	2269	209	59	379	2916	2797	104.25%
2	3094	57	15	251	3417	3489	97.93%
3	731	7	3	80	821	845	97.15%
4	1134	16	2	95	1247	1269	98.26%
6	1677	28	11	124	1840	1863	98.76%
7	2112	36	13	188	2349	2378	98.78%
8	1801	23	13	192	2029	2059	98.54%
9	2553	50	7	113	2723	2739	99.41%
10	1334	28	11	176	1549	1534	100.97%
11	1609	19	10	157	1795	1844	97.34%
99	1440	80	18	157	1695	1906	88.92%
Totals	19754	553	162	1912	22381	22723	98.49%

Totals as of March 3, 2026
449 Legacy Life Members
570 members needed to reach our 101% goal 22,951

TOP RECRUITING UPDATE

through 3/3/2026

Recruiter	Post	Dist.	Recruits	Recruiter	Post	Dist.	Recruits
Robert E. Haisler	11038	1	101	Paul R. Koehler	305	9	6
Steven J. Eisenhauer	1318	2	45	Michael F. Fischer	11038	1	5
Thomas E. Heath	1621	1	31	Randall J. Meyer	1163	2	5
James A. Cairo	11038	1	25	Christina F. Flanagan	664	7	5
Jason T. Coffey	11038	1	25	Phillip D. Nelson	2723	7	5
Brent C. Hibbard	11038	1	25	Glenn E. Manske	7784	8	5
Dena M. McCormick	11038	1	25	David F. Gentile	9536	10	5
Michelle Leick-Leurquin	2113	8	17	John D. McCoy	7308	1	4
Adam S. Wallace	328	2	12	Rob L. Drogsvold	328	2	4
Randy L. Engness	2204	9	11	Garret A. Collins	2260	2	4
Gundel M. E. Metz	1318	2	9	Richard J. Bartol	2925	6	4
Lawrence A. Rugg	7308	1	7	Nate Haumschild	2115	9	4
Thomas J. Hoffman	2723	7	6	James G. Alsteen	3143	10	4

TWO Belts

District 1 Cdr. Jim Cairo was again the recipient of both the Membership and Life Membership Belts at the Mid-Winter meeting. Sherri Smith photo.



Cheese Belt

District 11 Cdr. Tricia Flaig was the proud recipient of the "Cheese Belt". Sherri Smith photo.



Comrades,
Congratulations to our Red Carpet winners! Everyone is doing awesome work by being on schedule for Membership and on our way to the 101% goal. As Commander Letto has reminded us: "Every member we gain strengthens our voice. At 101%, we don't just speak – we are heard!"

We still have many Challenges to reward you for your successful recruiting to strengthen our membership, but first, let's catch up on the winners of the Challenges so far:

Michele Rathke
State Membership
Chairman



715-218-0440
MicheleR@vfwwi.org



2025 MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM CHALLENGES

through 2/28/2026

Early Bird-Continuous Membership Award - deadline 9/30/2025

Drawing for a Life Membership from all Continuous members who renew their dues at least one month earlier than when they are due. Drawing at 2026 Mid-Winter.

- William La Brosse - Post 9719, Pulaski

1st Quarter-100% membership achieved by 09/30/2025:

- Post with 50 or more members - winner of \$500:
Post 3143, Rhinelander - 104.88%
- Post with 26-49 members - winner of \$250:
Post 10195, Hillpoint - 103.13%

2nd Quarter - 100% membership achieved by 12/30/2025:

- Post with 50 or more members members - winner of \$250:
Post 2895, Cudahy - 101.47%
- Posts with 26-49 members - winner of \$125:
Post 2241, Neillsville - 100.00%

Monthly recruiter challenges

December: \$150 to the VFW Store

- Dena M. McCormick, Post 11038, Rochester – Individual winner
- Post 11038, Rochester – Post winner

January: Two tickets to the Fireside Dinner Theatre in Fort Atkinson, mileage to and from, and overnight hotel stay

- Jason Coffey, Post 11038, Rochester

February: Two tickets for Veteran of the Game at a selected Brewers Home Game

- Christina Flanagan, Post 664, Clintonville

2025 MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM CHALLENGES

remaining from 3/1/2026 through 5/31/2026

3rd Quarter - 100% membership achieved by 3/31/2026:

- Posts with 50 or more members achieving 100% membership by 3/31/2026 will be entered to win \$200 (1 winner).
- Posts with 26-49 members will be entered to win \$100 (1 winner).
- Any Post that previously qualified and did not win will be eligible for these drawings.

Monthly recruiter challenges

March: One VFW member will join the State Commander at their choice of Supper Club in the winner's community. The winner will be picked up and taken to dinner in the Commander's Corvette. Incentives and locations will be scheduled based on weather and schedules.

May: VFW Members who recruit in the month of May:

- 5 members - \$100; 3 members - \$50; 1 member - \$25

PLUS there are still many **OTHER INCENTIVES** for Individuals, Posts and Districts! Check them out in Cdr. Letto's Program Book starting on page 14, and "Recruit Wisconsinly"! **Did you recruit at least one member into the VFW prior to January 31, 2026?** Check with your District Commander - they may have a "Recruit Wisconsinly" t-shirt for you.

And here's one more – The Challenge of the Swag! Whoever submits an e-mail to Carla McAndrew (carlam@vfwwi.org) first, with **ALL** of the correct answers to the following questions will win a swag bag. Then, whoever submits an e-mail to Carla **second** with **ALL or part** of the correct answers to the following questions will win a swag bag. A third prize is also available for answering only the Bonus Question correct. **NOTE: the use of only vfw.org or vfwwi.org website do not constitute an acceptable answer!** (Membership Team not eligible)

1. Where to find the VFW eligibilities?
2. Where to find your Post membership percentages?
3. What are the requirements for Red Carpet?
4. Where to find the National By-laws?
5. **Bonus question:** Where do you go to change your address/or change address as a snow bird?

DEADLINE is Friday, April 3, 2026. "Make it Count"

"BUDDY"® POPPY



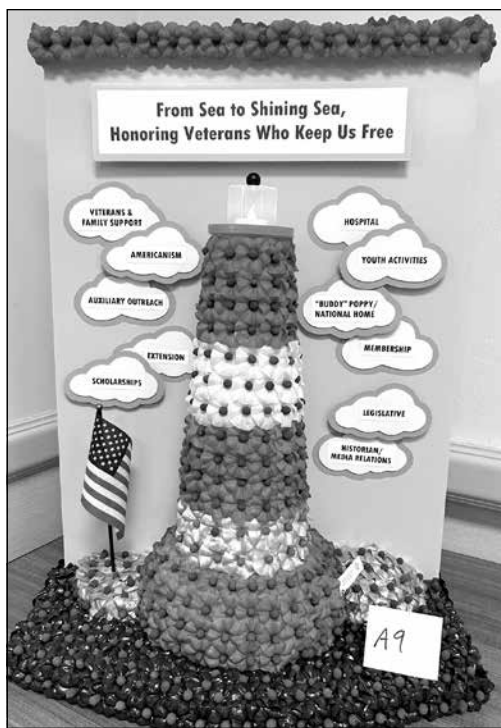
ABOVE: First Place – Aux. 8483, Madison-Truax.
AT RIGHT: Second Place – Aux. 1038, Chippewa Falls.
BELOW: Third Place – Aux. 10262, Plover.

Mid-Winter "Buddy"® Poppy Contest Winners

Dept. "Buddy"® Poppy Chair Louise Engness reported:

"We had 19 entries in the Mid-Winter Conference "Buddy"® Poppy Contest, a great showing of beautiful displays, using both Anniversary and regular Poppies." Congratulations to our winners:

- First Place – Aux. 8483, Madison-Truax - \$20 – 122 Poppies used
- Second Place – Aux. 1038, Chippewa Falls - \$15 – 478 Poppies used
- Third Place – Aux. 10262, Plover - \$10 – 212 Poppies used
- Honorable Mention – Aux. 2204, Rice Lake - \$5.00



VFW DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN BUDDY POPPY ORDER FORM
"Discount & No Shipping Special"
March 23–April 13, 2026

A special opportunity to increase your Buddy Poppy stock in March and April. Stock up for your annual events and youth projects. Online and mailed sales will be honored from **March 23 to April 13**. All mailed in orders must be postmarked **NLT April 13** to be honored. Orders will be mailed by the first week of May.

Post Number: _____
Point of Contact: _____
Mailing Address: _____
Phone Number: _____

ITEM	QUANTITY	COST	TOTAL ORDERED
Buddy Poppy – Tin	___ X 500	\$75.00 per 500	_____
	___ X 1000	\$165.00 per 1000	_____
Buddy Poppy Legacy	___ X 500	\$150.00 per 500	_____
	___ X 1000	\$285.00 per 1000	_____
TOTAL DUE			_____

Remit payment with this order form. Unused Poppies cannot be returned

To Pay By Credit Card

Type of Card: _____
Name on Card: _____
Card #: _____
CVC #: _____ Exp Date (MM/YY) _____
Signature: _____ Zip Code: _____

Order & Pay online at
VFWWI.ORG
~OR~
Mail to:
VFW of Wisconsin
PO Box 6128
Monona, WI 53716-0128

YOUTH POPPY CONTEST RESULTS

This Mid-Winter Conference marked the First Annual Wisconsin VFW Mid-Winter Youth "Buddy"® Poppy Display Contest for grades K-12. There were two entries, both for the K-2 Division. Entries were submitted by Mrs. Katlin Dilge's 2nd Grade Class at Clintonville Elementary School, sponsored by VFW Post 664 and by Jean Miller, on behalf of a home-schooled 1st grade student, sponsored by VFW Post 9537 Auxiliary.

This contest is a great opportunity to talk with students about your service and talk about Veterans in your community. We hope to have many more entries next year.

Winners of our First Annual Youth Buddy Poppy Display Contest were:

- First Place – Clintonville Elementary School 2nd Grade Class
- Second Place – Home School 1st Grader

The VFW Department of Wisconsin will be hosting its annual Department of Wisconsin Buddy Poppy Display Contest at the State Convention, June 10-13 in Rothschild. More information on the State Competition will be available in the May/June VFW NEWS. The winner of this contest will be submitted to the National VFW Display Contest held in July in Reno, NV at the VFW National Convention.

Please ensure that you are submitting your Post "Buddy"® Poppy Distribution Report to the Department for the annual Poppy Distribution recognition. Our Top Distributors will be recognized at our State Convention.

As of now, we have 75 Posts in the State that have ordered the minimum of 500 Buddy Poppies, set by National every year. Please remember that if your Post is trying for All-American, you need to order a minimum of 500 Buddy Poppies by the end of the year, June 30. Why not take advantage of the "April Special" found elsewhere on this page?

Brandon Pszanka
Poppy Co-Chair
VFW
920-604-0811
brandon.pszanka@gmail.com



Youth Winners

Winners of our First Annual Youth "Buddy"® Poppy Display Contest were:
FAR LEFT: First Place – Clintonville Elementary School 2nd Grade Class.
AT LEFT: Second Place – Home School 1st Grader.

TAPS TAPS TAPS TAPS TAPS TAPS TAPS

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

Post	Name	City	Post	Name	City	Post	Name	City	Post	Name	City
305	Roy Campbell	Eau Claire	2037	Carl Tesch	Green Bay	6279	Clifford Kleven	Friendship	8483	Donald Janquart	Waunakee
305	Donald Gregis	Eau Claire	2063	Gerald Gumz	Oshkosh	6279	John Stake	Friendship	8483	Elmer Lee	Madison
305	Jack Gunderson	Chippewa Falls	2063	Jack Rein	Wausaukee	6375	Frank Eames	Elkhorn	8483	John Nash	Madison
305	Edwin Hanson, Jr.	Eau Claire	2112	David Coman, Sr.	Tomah	6375	Charles Jansky	Burlington	8491	Charles Slack	Ladysmith
305	Alphons Pitterle	Eau Claire	2113	Michael Vieau	De Pere	6375	William Morrissey	Chicago, IL	8584	Alan Jacobson	Westby
305	Carl Skamfer, Jr.	Hawkins	2115	Ralph Bader	Woodville	6375	James Olson	Sharon	8834	Wayne Christman	Hartford
305	Ralph Stone	Panama City, FL	2115	Carl Luepke	Hudson	6377	Gabriel Kolesari	Sussex	9057	Robert Schesel	Thorp
388	Michael Atarian	Wausau	2115	Raymond Quinn	Saint Paul, MN	6377	Robert Unke	Chippewa Falls	9156	James Heckert	Sheboygan
388	Warren Eschenbach	Schofield	2126	Norm Bodway	Menasha	6498	Leroy Beyer	West Bend	9156	Otto Hofmann	Kimberly
388	Clemence Folz	Schofield	2126	John Boehm	Appleton	6498	Louis Ceci	Milwaukee	9202	Lowell Mortimer	New Berlin
388	Melvin Marotz	Kronenwetter	2126	Paul Mix	Menasha	6498	William Ferguson, Jr.	Milwaukee	9387	James McGowan	Wis. Dells
388	Louis Moser, Jr.	Wausau	2126	Donald Rae	Menasha	6498	Duane Gehling	Pewaukee	9392	Daniel Klossner	Columbus
388	Robert Prah, Jr.	Schofield	2204	Robert Yarish	Rice Lake	6498	John Grandsard	New Berlin	9464	Anthony Celske	Fox River Grove, IL
664	Richard Beggs	Clintonville	2227	Lewis Hildebrand	Haines City, FL	6498	Glen Mueller	Milwaukee	9510	John Smedema	Cambria
664	Dennis Schoen	Caroline	2227	Woodrow Reich	Medford	6498	Michael Raap	Milwaukee	9511	Kenneth Veith	Arena
690	John Carlson	Ashland	2227	James Thieme	Colby	6498	Norman Schultz	Greenfield	9536	James Hannemann	Mercer
721	Gary Goerke	Waukesha	2260	Michael Anagnostopoulos	Oconomowoc	6550	Michael Campbell	Eau Claire	9537	Ronald Knuth	Pewaukee
721	Walter Hahn	Milwaukee	2260	Thomas Gengler	Milwaukee	6705	Marvin Kostka	Denmark	9537	Richard Kuenn	Pewaukee
721	Nestor Hinojosa, Jr.	Fresno, CA	2267	Bernard Couey	Richland Center	6856	Harold Johnson	Amery	9719	Gene Halbrook	Green Bay
721	Donald Hubert, Jr.	Milwaukee	2267	Gerald Fry	Richland Center	6905	John Petterson	Evansville	10173	Frank Bunnell	Elkhorn
721	Joseph Rucci	Waukesha	2306	Howard Hayes	Beloit	7131	Fred Gosse	Orangevale, CA	10173	Ronald Johnsen	Media, PA
721	Clarence Stoel	Waukesha	2306	Donald Propp	Beloit	7221	Ray Jones	Kingman, AZ	10173	Lewis Oder	Delavan
721	Michael Weigl	Wales	2312	Kenneth Johnson	Ridgeway	7232	Junior Lee	Eau Claire	10197	Larry Ramm	Apache Junction, AZ
1038	Clyde Erickson	Chippewa Falls	2312	Ronald Leck	Monroe	7233	Carroll Pedersen	Hayward	10394	Ralph Kuba	Milwaukee
1038	Cletus Henry	Chippewa Falls	2344	Lewis Hines	Lancaster	7308	Richard Guenther	Kenosha	10394	Harland Phillips	New Berlin
1038	Harold Radke	Chippewa Falls	2653	William Stewart	White Lake	7308	David Tippens	Mt. Zion, IL	10441	Richard Hansen	Manhattan Beach, CA
1248	Wayne Dent	Manitowoc	2687	William Haskin	Tomahawk	7345	Charles Halverson	Madison	10452	Dennis Novak	Princeton
1382	Robert Gutsche	Tomah	2708	Richard Dray	Peoria, AZ	7345	Robert Jacobson	Dodgeville	10544	Earl Jackson	Appleton
1391	Richard Imhoff	Racine	2778	Albert Baer, Jr.	Appleton	7485	Eugene Groh	Milwaukee	10818	Alex Schroeder	Stillwater, MN
1391	James Krucas	Kenosha	2778	Wilho Knuuti	Houghton, MI	7485	Donald Hanna	New Berlin	10911	Merlin Winchell	Sauk City
1391	Alvin Madisen	Racine	2778	James Miller	Menasha	7485	Michael Smith	Milwaukee	11038	Charles Ahler	Racine
1391	Ronald Willing	Milton	2778	Robert Nowak	Appleton	7534	Walter Jones	Green Bay	11038	Douglas Pachucki	Wind Lake
1393	Herman Berndt	West Bend	2778	Duane Philis	Neenah	7534	Arthur Schultz	Green Bay	11038	Terry Schmidt	Saint Louis, MO
1393	Joseph Lewinski	Waukesha	2778	Sterling Rudie	Appleton	7591	Lynn Poole	Madison	11346	Herbert Lucht	Wautoma
1530	James Hendrickson	Cedarburg	2778	Harris Tofte	Lexington, SC	7591	James Sime	Middleton	15051	Benjamin Adams	Milwaukee
1580	Albert Burzinski	Ironwood, MI	2823	Gerald John Weber	La Crescenta, CA	7591	Thomas Tucker	Cottage Grove	15051	Kenneth Aubol	Rhineland
1621	Paul Hulick	Janesville	2895	Charles Wagner	Oak Creek	7629	J. Reger	Mineral Point	15051	Gordan Beach	Rhineland
1621	Katsumi Neeno	Janesville	2895	Timothy Wegner	Wis. Dells	7692	John Bartels	Appleton	15051	Gary Benrud	Galesville
1638	Raymond Buck	Merrill	2925	Patrick Flanigan	Berlin	7694	Ronald Goette	Merrimac	15051	Edward Burns	Oconomowoc
1638	Robert Chipres	Seville, Spain	2925	Frederick Peterson	Waupun	7694	Robert Holum	Marathon, FL	15051	Dennis Caldwell	Blk River Fls
1638	Eric Hysing	Merrill	3143	Everett Cole, Jr.	Rhineland	7694	Neal Jessie	Prairie Du Sac	15051	Stephen Conway, Jr.	Crandon
1638	Clarence Voeltzke	Merrill	3143	John Fischer	Rhineland	7898	Brent Wholeben	Minocqua	15051	John Dinse	Neenah
1691	Richard Arnold	Nashotah	3153	John Ross	Wausaukee	7908	Rolland Krause	La Crosse	15051	Jim Gibson	Mount Horeb
1691	Michael Mahoney	Cudahy	3392	Allan Dahlke	Luxemburg	7924	James Babiarz	Joliet, IL	15051	Eugene Griffin	Shell Lake
1691	James Parnau	Mukwonago	3709	Wallace Fischer	Dixon, MO	7924	Raymond De Muynck	Union Grove	15051	William Gross	Jefferson
1707	Donald Sutfin	Portage	5158	Marvin Ludwig	Farmington, NM	8021	John Gilbertson	La Crosse	15051	Arthur Klepps	Appleton
1707	Earl Williams	Oak Creek	5158	Robert Schwartz	Juneau	8021	Paul Stenslien	West Salem	15051	Leavi Lewis	Milwaukee
1865	Carl Ambrose	Casselberry, FL	5276	Larry Beecher	Belvidere, IL	8123	Milan Gilman	Viroqua	15051	John Madsen	Superior
1866	Dale Weinfurter	Marshfield	5278	Richard Turner	Ripon	8171	Donald Barringer	Muskego	15051	George McQueen	Franklin
1879	William Lucht	Fort Atkinson	5373	Vern Forman	Port Washington	8171	Roger Bergholz	Muskego	15051	John Meyers	Dalton
1904	David Kneuppel	Fond du Lac	5373	Edward Friede	Cedar Grove	8216	Walter Burkholder	Fitchburg	15051	James Peters	White Lake
1904	Arnold Roloff	N. Fond du Lac	5387	Gerald Dieter	Warrens	8216	Christopher Lutes	Ogden, UT	15051	Richard Peterson	Eagle River
1904	Charles Setser	Cape Coral, FL	5470	Thomas Burton	Racine	8280	Robert Campo	Kronenwetter	15051	Richard Roberts	Racine
1904	Franklin Wilhelms	Fond du Lac	5716	Fred Gebauer	Waukesha	8338	Ken Bowen	Cumberland	15051	Paul Smith	Fort Myers, FL
1916	Kenneth Bolt	Reedsburg	5828	Robert Fredrick	Amery	8338	George Steins	Farmington, NM	15051	Lawrence Stevens	Wild Rose
1916	Frederick Cunningham	Reedsburg	5960	Larry Jackson	Nekoosa	8375	James Kirwan	Twin Lakes	15051	Leslie Swanson	Superior
1916	Donald Elwood	Reedsburg	6003	Peter Freitag	Oxford	8483	Donald Evans	DeForest	15051	Kermit Thomas	Kingsley, MI
1916	George Lamke	Reedsburg	6007	Jackie Bertotto	Almond	8483	Sam Fatsis	Madison	15051	Roderie Thompson	Duluth, MN
1916	Joseph Whitcomb	Wis. Dells									

Deadline for the May 2026 issue is April 6.



Fisher House Wisconsin Executive Director Steven Rose, a US Air Force Veteran, shared info about Fisher House at our Mid-Winter Conference. He can be reached at 414-775-7716 or srose@fisherhousewi.org.
Sherri L. Smith Photo.

FISHER HOUSE NEWS

As noted in "Bits & Pieces" in this and the January issue, five years of planning for a second Fisher House in Madison have come to fruition. **Fisher House Madison** will be located on the Northeast corner of Nursery Drive and Deming Way, close to the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital.

Founded in 1990, the Fisher House Foundation opened its first "Home Away from Home" in Bethesda, MD in 1991, to provide food, lodging and support to families of Veterans and active-duty service personnel who are receiving care at a nearby VA facility. Most homes include up to 20 family suites along with common kitchen, dining, laundry and social areas. ALL is available at no cost to the families.

At this writing, there are 100+ Fisher Houses in operation world-wide, with one under current construction and 16 more (including Madison) in the planning stages. The Madison construction is expected to



start this summer with a total project cost of \$9-12 million. More than \$3.8 million has been contributed to the project to date, including a \$1 million donation made in 2025.

We wish Fisher House - Milwaukee a Happy 10th Birthday, and await the start of Fisher House - Madison eagerly. Stay tuned for more news and visit fisherhousewi.org to learn more and of course, to donate!

S'MORE NEWS

Happy Spring. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who participated in the Mid-Winter meeting. I hope you found the opportunity to engage in a S.W.A.P. Your continued dedication to our organization is invaluable and greatly appreciated. THANK YOU, for all you do! I also want to acknowledge those who reached out through calls, emails, or thank-you notes to convey your gratitude. Each of you contributes significantly to our collective success.

As the VFW and Auxiliary participate in the VFW Legislative Conference in Washington D.C., I want to emphasize our role as a significant advocate for veterans' issues. Your involvement in the "Stories in Action" initiative can amplify the impact of our legislative priorities. I urge you to convey your personal experiences and those of veterans or family members to your representatives, underscoring the importance of honoring their contracts. Be their voice in recognition of their service.

As we continue to pursue our growth initiatives, the arrival of spring presents an excellent opportunity to plan membership drives alongside our existing programs. If you

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



are seeking inspiration or ideas, please do not hesitate to contact a chairman for assistance. Many individuals are driven by a deep commitment to assist others, particularly veterans, finding personal fulfillment in their service. It is essential to reflect on your motivations and consider how your actions positively impact veterans and their families. Approach each step of your service with genuine intent, ensuring that your efforts contribute meaningfully to their well-being.

"To do what you love and feel that it matters – how could anything be more fun?"
– Katharine Graham

REVITALIZATION

We've often heard it said that change is hard. Sometimes it is. To revitalize an Auxiliary, it takes change. Revitalization is needed when the Auxiliary has had issues with something that affects the group negatively. They may have poor attendance for their meetings, a lack of interest in the programs or inability to attract new members, to name a few. People get burned out when it's the same members carrying the load and doing the work all the time.

If these sound like issues your Auxiliary is experiencing, it's time to revitalize! The best place to start is in MALTA, on the National website vfwauxiliary.org. There are many useful tools to assist in revitalization. The resources under **Extension & Revitalization** include a Healthy Auxiliary Toolkit. The subjects covered include:

- Auxiliary Meeting Checklist for the Auxiliary President
- Healthy Auxiliary Checklist To-Dos & Deadlines
- Healthy Communication Phone/Text Tree
- VFW Auxiliary Health Certificate
- VFW Auxiliary Meeting Challenges & Solutions
- VFW Auxiliary Member Questionnaire
- VFW Auxiliary Sample Meeting Agenda

Reviewing each of these tools can give you insight into what needs to be done to bring renewed enthusiasm and energy back to your Auxiliary.

Revitalization must be a team effort. The Department Officers are ready to help, just ask. Sometimes asking for help is the hardest part for anyone. District Presidents: you are the eyes and ears, and the Official Visit may be the starting point for a Revitalization team to be put in place.

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



YOUTH ACTIVITIES

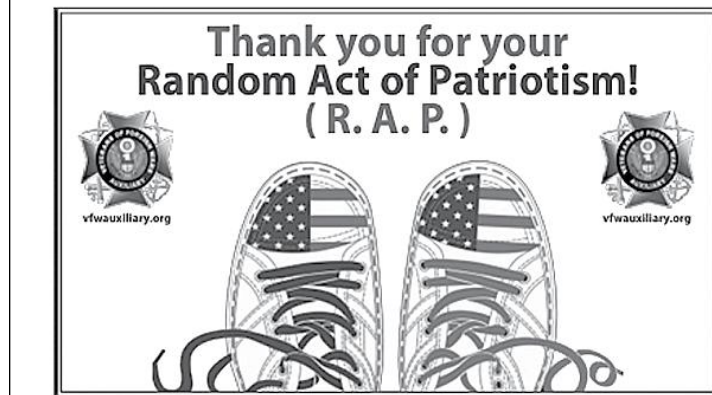
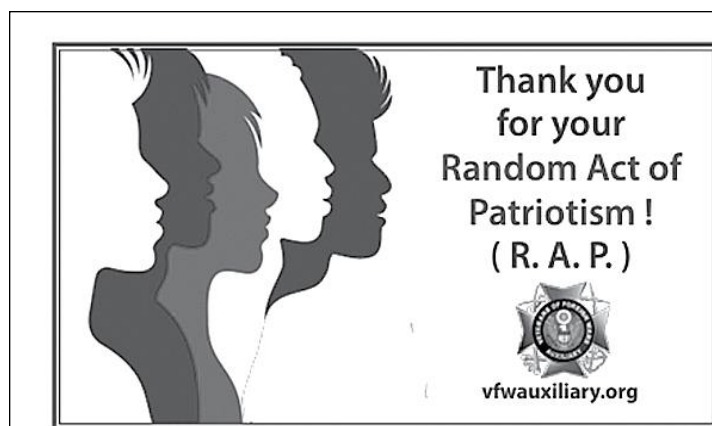
We all know how important it is to involve youth in our Auxiliary programs. But it is equally important to let our boys and girls know that we appreciate all that they do. Recognizing our youth for their achievements will encourage them to keep giving back to our veterans and community. Through our Youth Activities Program, we can award our boys and girls with Random Act of Patriotism (R.A.P.) Cards; Youth Acts of Kindness Certificates; Individual Patriotic Youth Awards; and Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citations. Let's take a closer look at the R.A.P. Card – we have four new exciting designs this year!

Patty Jansky
Youth Activities
Chairman
715-497-4066
pajansky@charter.net



Have you seen a child show respect to the American Flag, recite the Pledge of Allegiance, or honor our Veterans and country in some way? Let them know that you see them by giving them a R.A.P. Card.

DEADLINES! Patriotic artwork and entry forms for the **Illustrating America** contest are due to your local Auxiliary on **March 31 and then to me by April**



15 for Department judging. Send in your Auxiliary's first-place winner in each grade division (K-2, 3-5, and 6-8). Be sure to use the 2025-2026 entry form and follow all the rules. Send to: Patty Jansky, 12758 43rd Ave., Chippewa Falls, WI 54729.

Your Auxiliary is probably doing some

AUXILIARY

HOW TO TREAT PEOPLE WITH RESPECT

This is a VFW Auxiliary "Membership Moment" from our National Organization. It is just one of many useful resources to help your Auxiliary and its members grow and prosper. Log in to MALTA – then go to **Member Resources**, then **Membership**.

The key to treating people with respect is to treat them as you would like to be treated – also commonly known as the Golden Rule. When dealing with difficult members in your local Auxiliary, seek to understand the root of their problems toward you. Then, you will be able to rise above the situation, and treat them well.

Here are several tips for treating members with respect within your Auxiliary:

1. Practice self-respect.

Because you want to respect others as you would hope to be respected, it is incredibly important that you extend to yourself the same respect and courtesy that you would extend to another person. If someone says something cruel or demeaning, speak up. Tell them what you found to be disrespectful and why.

2. Really listen.

A lot of people don't listen very well, because they're distracted, checking their phone, or thinking about the next thing that they are going to say. Learn to really listen when other people speak.

3. Treat other people's ideas with due consideration.

This means listening to another person's ideas, opinions, and advice with an open mind. Even if you don't necessarily agree with them, give them the benefit of thinking about what they have said.

4. Be mindful of your words.

Words are very powerful and they can be incredibly disrespectful if used improperly. Think carefully about what you're going to say, and to whom, otherwise you might hurt someone.

5. Cultivate good manners.

This is as simple as saying "thank you" and "please" when you're requesting something from another person. It shows that you respect the time and effort that it will take for them to help you, and it will allow them to feel respected.

If we follow the above "tips" it can go a long way in making our Auxiliaries a place that people want to be and ones they want to associate with, which will help us to be **"Unwavering Support for Uncommon Heroes!"**

Auxiliary	Current Total	Deceased	Paid Total	Prior Total	Current Percent	Paid Percent
Total – Non-Dist.	868	20	888	965	89.95%	92.02%
Total – Dist. 2	1068	26	1094	1084	98.52%	100.92%
Total – Dist. 4	287	16	303	286	100.35%	105.94%
Total – Dist. 7	1248	27	1275	1245	100.24%	102.41%
Total – Dist. 8	808	17	825	814	99.26%	101.35%
Total – Dist. 9	775	15	790	766	101.17%	103.13%
Total – Dist. 10	676	16	692	685	98.69%	101.02%
Total – Dist. 11	438	9	448*	447	97.99%	100.22%
WI – At Large	1163	13	1176	1129	103.01%	104.16%
Total – Dept. of WI	7331	159	7491*	7421	98.79%	100.94%

Membership as of 3/3/2026 — *with 1 Canceled

wonderful projects with youth. The **2025-2026 Youth Activities National Program Awards for Auxiliaries** is for the "Most creative and/or unique activity and/or event of the VFW Auxiliary working with a youth group." Why not give it a try? The application is due to me by March 31.

You can find all of these items plus so much more on our Wisconsin website – **Youth Activities** – or on MALTA, in Member Resources and Youth Activities. When we encourage our youth to become involved, we are not only making a difference today but also ensuring the future for our Veterans, our country and our Auxiliary.

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	Louise Beckwith*	Stoughton	6377	Mary Ann Kudronowicz*	Sussex
388	Leona F. Cichocke*	Wausau	7232	Irene Lund*	Eau Claire
388	Geraldine Hopperdietzel*	Wausau	7300	Nancy E. Eickermann	Park Falls
388	Mary Ann Howard*	Wausau	7300	Constance Uhlig*	Glidden
659	Carol Novy*	Two Rivers	7444	Barbara J. Corrigan*	Goodman
664	Elverna Schwenke*	Marion	7444	Leona Jarosz*	Armstrong Creek
1038	Constance Kinderman*	Chippewa Falls	7591	Doris R. Brendler*	Madison
1038	Lucyann LeCleir*	Chippewa Falls	7591	Ethel Denton*	Oregon
1707	Elaine L. Benson*	Portage	7591	Betty J. Hirsch*	McFarland
1908	Lola Gonia*	Oshkosh	7591	Lin Hochstetter	Zephyrhills, FL
1908	Karen S. Ruby*	Oshkosh	7629	Sandra L. Jones*	Platteville
2063	Carol E. Reichardt*	Crivitz	7929	Nancy J. Shubert*	Lake City, FL
2112	Margaret Zarrella	Strasburg, VA	7929	Sandra K. White*	Amery
2113	Alvira Fink*	De Pere	8329	Lucille J. Peet*	Barnes
2778	Beverly Lyon	Appleton	8329	Anne Wikan	Barnes
3709	Sandra J. Sullivan*	Watertown	9156	Lois A. Van Ess*	Cedar Grove
5778	Mildred Trzecinski*	Phillips	9677	Donna M. Bartell*	Green Bay
6003	Ruth M. Johnson	Milwaukee	9677	Germaine L. Reed	Green Bay
6003	Georgiana J. Johnson*	Montello	9677	Dorothy Van Bellinger	Green Bay
6279	Marilyn J. Coleman*	Adams	10394	Joanne Nelson	Palos Hills, IL
6279	Beverly Leverance*	Wis. Rapids	15051	Jean E. Dooge*	Jefferson
6279	Delores M. Rusch*	Nekoosa	15051	Ann M. Marquardt*	Shawano
6377	Patricia M. Klein*	Sussex	15051	Emma Rowell*	Green Bay

* DENOTES LIFE MEMBER

Thank you, Marla, for giving me this opportunity to share information from the National Mid-Year Council of Administration meeting.

There were a lot of topics discussed, including revised proposed standing rules (for Mid-Year) 2025-2026 shared with us. Another topic that had some good discussion was National implementing a Legacy Life Membership that will mirror the VFW's. Here are some of the current plans being proposed:

- One level available only and the cost would be \$1,000; could be paid in MALTA.
- The payout would be \$10 per year, for 20 years after the member is deceased.
- The member would need to be a Legacy Life member for one year for the payout to occur.
- The Legacy Life member would receive a membership card, pin, coin, 10% VFW store discount, their name on the memorial wall in MALTA and would be

Reneé Quinn
NDCM #11
563-343-6616
rmquinn73@gmail.com



eligible for the Legacy Life cap patch. Also, the VFW and Auxiliary databases must mesh for this to occur. The vote on this was postponed until National Convention. We are asking [National HQ Director of Accounting] George Martin for a fact sheet to share with the National Council, for us to share with you. I will report on it here when we get the information. I look forward to celebrating your Department's 100th anniversary in June.

WAYS AND MEANS UPDATE

Thank you to all who participated in the Paint and Sip event at the Mid-Winter Conference. You all made it a fun and successful event. And, congratulations to our winner of the Mobility Scooter – Art Hussong from San Diego, CA. Heartfelt thanks to HME Home Medical in Green Bay for their generous donation of the Scooter, valued at \$2,080, AND to all of the individuals, Auxiliaries and Posts that supported the Raffle.

Please help us as we celebrate our Department's 100th Anniversary and purchase a "Countdown to Celebrating a Hundred" Calendar Raffle. ONLY 1,300 tickets are available at \$20 each, with all winning tickets re-entered for future drawings. **Prizes total \$3,000!**

Please see an Auxiliary (or District Presi-

dent) to purchase yours. There will be drawings Monday through Friday from May 18 to June 6, as we countdown to State Convention, where the Auxiliary will celebrate one hundred years of service to Veterans and their families. Thank you to all who have helped our Auxiliary reach the milestone, and thank you in advance for supporting this Raffle!

Jennifer Mauritz

Chaplain/Ways and Means Co-Chair

715-383-8628
jmauritz922@gmail.com



We Rise by Lifting Others
WI VFW Auxiliary Raffle



Count Down to "Celebrating a Hundred"

President Kim McWilliams invites you to join the countdown to "Celebrating a Hundred" and help us be there for our Veterans and their families for another hundred by purchasing tickets for this raffle.

We are "Celebrating a Hundred" years of helping veterans and families this year and we will be holding drawings on the days as shown on the calendar shown below.

Thank you for supporting the Wisconsin VFW Auxiliary.

Your ticket will be in every drawing. Winning tickets are re-entered for future drawings. Drawings will be held at Noon on the days noted on the calendar at the Treasurer's office located at 1383 W. Wisconsin Ave. Oconomowoc, WI.

Prize money will be mailed weekly. Proceeds go to the WI VFWA General Fund. Winner's name and ticket number will be published on our website, www.vfwauxwi.org. Only 1,300 tickets to be sold!!

Ticket Price: \$20

All Calendars must be turned in at district Spring meetings, to your District President, **these may not be mailed.** All entries must be to Lenore Otto before May 15, 2025, **NO** late entries will be allowed.

May 18, 2026- June 5, 2026						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
May 18 1x \$100	May 19 3x \$50	May 20 2x \$100	May 21 2x \$50	May 22 2x \$100	May 23 May 23	May 24
May 25 3x \$250	May 26 1x \$100	May 27 3x \$50	May 28 2x \$100	May 29 3x \$50	May 30	May 31
June 1 1x \$100	June 2 3x \$50	June 3 2x \$100	June 4 3x \$50	June 5 3x \$100	June 6	June 7

#0001

Raffle License # R0032634-A-82120

#0001

PLEASE PRINT AND FILL OUT COMPLETELY

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____

SAMPLE

WI VFW Auxiliary, 1383 W. Wisconsin Ave., Oconomowoc, WI 53066
2025-26 WI VFWA Raffle Ticket * Raffle License #R0032634-A-82120

2026 DEADLINES!

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

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

Lillian Campbell Medical Scholarship
Applications due to Chair Nora (Kim) Goss by April 1

Year End Reports Due to District Presidents by April 1

Jeannette Frank Award Nominations due to Chair Lenore Otto by April 15

ONLY 10 DAYS LEFT!

LILLIAN CAMPBELL MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIP

The deadline to receive applications is fast approaching!

If you know someone who is currently filling out the application or planning to apply, please encourage them to submit their application as soon as possible.

APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY:

APRIL 1, 2026

This scholarship supports students pursuing careers in the medical field, including:

- ◆ Nursing
- ◆ Physician Assistant
- ◆ Medical & Surgical Technology
- ◆ Physical Therapy
- ◆ Dental Programs
- ◆ Pharmacy
- ◆ Physician Assistant
- ◆ Physical Therapy
- ◆ Occupational Therapy
- ◆ Dental Programs
- ◆ And other medical-related programs

Scholarships cannot be awarded without applicants!

Your continued support in sharing and promoting this scholarship opportunity is greatly appreciated. Thank you for helping us reach deserving students!



UNWAVERING SUPPORT
FOR UNCOMMON HEROES®

Kimberly Goss
Lillian Campbell Medical Scholarship Chairman

kimberly.gossdistrict9aux.wi@gmail.com



Comrades and Auxiliary members always fill the room to support the Commander-in-Chief's Testimony.

Double Sacrifice, NOT Double-Dipping

The VFW Washington Conference was held March 1-5. Over 1,000 Comrades and Auxiliary members traveled to DC from all around the country, including 21 from the Dept. of Wisconsin. Day one included briefings from National leadership, the National Legislative Service, and comments from VA Secretary Doug Collins. Secretary Collins noted, "No Veteran should have to pay for their claims."

Jason Johns
Nat'l Legislative
Chair

608-209-0805
fightin4vets
@gmail.com



ABOVE: Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) was very receptive to the WI Delegation, listening carefully and reviewing the VFW Priority Goals during a very frank discussion.

AT LEFT: Many other Department Delegations also lined up outside of Sen. Ron Johnson's office, and walked in to lodge complaints with his staff, making it very clear we are NOT happy. Call Senator Johnson's office and tell him what he did was UNACCEPTABLE: (202) 224-5323.



Day two kicked off with Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore's testimony to a Joint Hearing of the House & Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. As the National Legislative Chairman, I had the privilege to join her in providing testimony and answering questions regarding the VFW's Legislative Priorities. It was a true honor to do so on behalf of our comrades and family members.

Immediately after the hearing concluded, Senator Richard Blumenthal (D)-CT, went to the Senate floor and moved for unanimous consent to pass the Major Richard Star Act (MRS Act). Unfortunately, Senator Ron Johnson (R)-WI rose to object and single-handedly blocked our number one Legislative Priority. Your Dept. of WI Delegation was in the Senate Gallery to watch him do so. To say we were "disappointed" is an understatement, as he betrayed Veterans right before our very eyes.

The MRS Act would allow these Veterans to collect their VA disability compensation, and their full DOD retirement pay - referred to as **concurrent receipt**. At present, these two payments are **offset** from each other. For example, if you receive \$3,000 from the VA and your DOD retirement is \$1,500, you only receive the VA payment as your DOD pay is completely offset. This is unfair as **DOD retirement is earned through time in service and VA disability is a recognition of injuries suffered while on active duty which have a lifelong impact**. As C-in-C Whitmore has noted: "This is not double-dipping, this is double sacrifice. Veterans have fulfilled their obligation. Now, the country must honor the contract. Not partially, not eventually, not someday, but today, fully and faithfully."

Ultimately, our Delegation was able to meet with all eight of Wisconsin's Representatives and Senator Baldwin. The Washington Conference wrapped up Wednesday evening with

a Congressional reception and presentation of the VFW Legislator of the Year Award to Rep. August Pfluger (R-TX), an Air Force Veteran and VFW Member, who is currently also a Colonel in the Air Force Reserves.

Here are the other Legislative Priorities we discussed with our members of Congress. Please reach out to your Representatives and Senators to ask for their support of these Priorities and of course, the Major Richard Star Act.

- **Community Care Reform:** (H.R. 740/S. 275-Veterans' ACCESS Act/H.R. 467-Foreign Medical Modernization Act): These bills would ensure Veterans received clear information and timely health care by improving the efficiency, oversight/coordination of VA's community care program and expand access to health care for Veterans living abroad by modernizing reimbursement systems and strengthening global care options.

- **Written Informed Consent For Suicide Prevention:** (H.R. 4837/S.3314-Written Informed Consent Act/H.R. 6858-Veteran Suicide Prevention Act). These bills would expand written consent requirements to ensure Veterans receive clear, written information about the benefits, risks, alternatives and expectations associated with long-term psychiatric medications/direct the VA Secretary to conduct a review of the deaths of certain Veterans who died by suicide, and the role prescribing practices and medication management may have played in these deaths.

- **Modernizing VA Brain Health Care:** (H.R. 2623-Innovative Therapies Centers of Excellence Act/Blast Overpressure Research and Mitigation Task Force Act/S.800-Precision Brain Health Research Act/ S.2737Veterans National Traumatic Brain Injury Act). These bills would authorize VA to establish

Centers to research and evaluate innovative approaches to treating PTSD and to develop the evidence and clinical expertise to inform future care decisions/strengthen VA's ability to conduct advanced brain health research focused on individualized care for conditions such as PTSD.

- **Cracking Down On Predatory Claims Companies:** The VFW urges Congress to enact legislation that would meaningfully prohibit the exploitation of Veterans by unscrupulous Claim Sharks, strengthen the VA accreditation system, and **oppose proposals such as H.R. 3132-CHOICE for Veterans Act** that would place Veterans in debt merely for seeking their earned benefits.

- **Transition From Service:** (H.R. 1845-TAP Promotion Act). This bill would codify VA's TAP curriculum to require an accredited representative be physically present at transition briefings, to assist service members with filing their Benefits Delivery at Discharge claims.

- **Post-9/11 GI Bill Book Stipend:** (H.R. 1965-Veteran Education Assistance Adjustment Act). This bill would adjust the Post-9/11 GI Bill book stipend from \$1,000 to \$1,400 and include annual increased based on the Consumer Price Index. The book stipend has not changed since the program's start in 2009.

- **Emerging Toxic Exposures:** The VFW urges Congress to conduct oversight hearings to ensure VA administers the PACT Act's presumption decision process transparently and in full compliance with the law.



Rep. Tom Tiffany (R-WI 07) also welcomed a Wisconsin VFW and Auxiliary team.



Likewise, a part of the WI Delegation met with Rep. Tony Wied (R-WI 08). He was elected to succeed Mike Gallagher in a special election last November.

★ ★ ★ ★ 2025-2026 Red Carpet Awards ★ ★ ★ ★

The numbers don't lie! The outstanding Membership efforts to date in the Department resulted in a significant number of Posts recognized for their achievements at this year's Red Carpet Awards Luncheon. Competing in five membership Divisions, it should be noted that many of the recipients have exceeded the 101% goal before the halfway mark of the Program year. That bodes very well for a strong finish to the year.

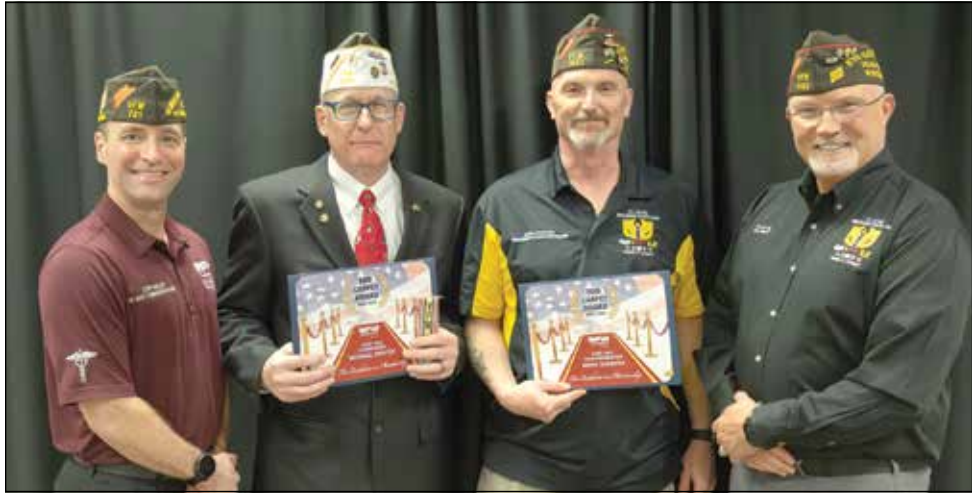
Congratulations to all of our Red Carpet Posts and Districts, shown here with State Commander Ty Letto and our National Rep, Sr. Vice C-in-C Cory Geisler. See page 14 for the other qualifying Posts and District recipients.

Photos by Sherri L. Smith. (All are available at vfwwi.org; click on ABOUT, then GALLERY; then View All Albums.)

AT RIGHT – Post 11038: Division 1 – 1st: Post 11038 QM Jim Cairo and Cdr. Michael Fischer. 126.64%

BELOW LEFT – Post 1621: Division 1 – 2nd: Post 1621 Cdr. Michael Zientek and QM Mark Dykstra. 95.91%

BELOW RIGHT – Post 7308: Division 2 – 1st: Post 7308 QM Larry Sorensen and Cdr. Larry Rugg. 101.78%



Post 1318: Division 2 – 2nd: Post 1318 Cdr. Steve Eisenhauer and QM Gundel Metz. 95.61%

Post 7534: Division 3 – 1st: Post 7534 Cdr. Bruce Jagodinsky and QM John Wierer. 103.40%



Post 328: Division 3 – 2nd: Post 328 SVC Mike Rey, for Cdr. Rob Drogsvold and QM Lothar Straub who could not attend. 100.49%

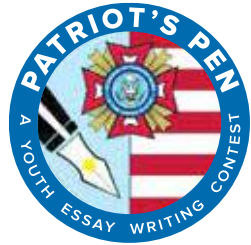
Post 2115: Division 3 – 3rd: Post 2115 Cdr. Nate Haumschild and QM Richard Byers. 100.00%



Post 2723: Division 4 – 1st: D7 Cdr. Dale Dahlke for Post 2723 Cdr. Tom Hoffman and QM Phil Nelson who could not attend. 106.60%

Post 1163: Division 4 – 2nd: Post 1163 Cdr. Curtis Gruenewald and QM Keith Lauth. 104.41%

★ ★ Celebrating Our Students and Teachers ★ ★



Another lively Mid-Winter Banquet celebrated our Department winners in the Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy programs, as well as our Smart/Maher Citizenship Education Teachers of the Year.

Again this year, three Patriot's Pen and ten Voice of Democracy awards were sponsored by various groups and individuals as listed elsewhere on these pages. We salute them for their support. We are also grateful for the continued support of our event by Humana and Festival Foods.

Congratulations to all of our winners. We wish you all the best in your future adventures! Thanks to Chairman Gundel Metz, Co-Chair Ron Ramos and our District Chairmen for info, and to

State Photographer Sherri L. Smith for the wonderful photos. REMEMBER: All photos are available at vfwwi.org; click on ABOUT, then GALLERY; then View All Albums.

Our Winners and Sponsors

Patriot's Pen	Student	School, Grade	Post, District	Award	Sponsor
First	Seanleander Hemanand	Templeton MS, 8	6377, 2	\$1,000	Dept. of WI Aux.
Second	Aryan Nanda	Classical Charter, 8	2778, 8	\$800	Post & Aux. 1621
Third	Mya Dahl	Cashton MS, 8	8584, 11	\$600	Post 2204
Voice of Dem.	Student	School & Grade	Post & District	Award	Sponsor
First	Sanjay Dagam	Brookfield Acad., 11	6498, 4	\$2,000	Dept. of WI Aux
Second	Natalie Popp	Lakeside Lutheran, 12	721, 2	\$1,200	Post & Aux. 1621
Third	Ella Budleski	DC Everest, 12	8280, 7	\$900	Dept. of WI VFW
Fourth	Laraya Grace G. Nord	Nord Classical Acad., 12	2204, 9	\$700	Post 10262
Fifth	Elisabeth van Schyndel	Freedom HS, 12	7692, 8	\$500	Post 1318
Runner-Up	Audrey Weber	Cashton HS, 12	8584, 11	\$250	Dist. 9 Riders Group
Runner-Up	Alexis Harris	Potosi HS, 11	5276, 3	\$250	PSC Gundel Metz
Runner-Up	Aidan Bodine	Washburn HS, 12	690, 10	\$250	VFW HQ Team
Runner-Up	Anna Ciha	Fond du Lac HS, 12	1904, 6	\$250	Randy & Louise Engness
Runner-Up	Wesley Keller	Burlington HS, 10	2823, 1	\$250	Dept. of WI VFW



ABOVE: Sanjay Dagam presents his winning Voice of Democracy Essay on the theme, "How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?"

AT LEFT: First Place Winner in the Voice of Democracy Program Sanjay M. Dagam of Brookfield (center) pauses with (from left): Aux. NDCM #11 Renee' Quinn of Iowa; Aux. Dept. President Kim McWilliams; VFW State Cdr. Ty Letto and VFW Sr. Vice Cdr.-in-Chief Cory Geisler, prior to presenting his winning essay.



The Department's top five winners in the Voice of Democracy proudly display their award plaques. Seated in front (l-r) are: Ella Budleski of Hatley (3rd); Sanjay Dagam of Brookfield (1st); Natalie Popp of Fitchburg (2nd). Standing behind them (l-r) are: Elisabeth van Schyndel of Freedom (5th) and Laraya Grace G. Nord of Cameron (4th).



The Voice of Democracy Runners-up included (from left): Anna Ciha of Fond du Lac; Alexis Harris of Potosi; Audrey Weber of Cashton; Wesley Keller of Burlington. Runner-up Aidan Bodine of Washburn could not attend due to illness.

★ ★ **Celebrating Our Students and Teachers** ★ ★



AT LEFT: First Place Winner in the Patriot's Pen Program Seanleander Hemanand of Sussex (center) displays the "big check" with (from left): Aux. NDCM #11 Renee' Quinn of Iowa; Aux. Dept. President Kim McWilliams; VFW State Cdr. Ty Letto and VFW Sr. Vice Cdr.-in-Chief Cory Geisler, prior to presenting his winning essay.

BELOW: Patriot's Pen Winners honored included (from left): Mya Dahl (3rd) of Cashton; Seanleander Hemanand (1st) of Sussex; Aryan Nanda (2nd) of Appleton.

BOTTOM LEFT: Seanleander Hemanand (center) is escorted into the Banquet by D2 Cdr. Steve Eisenhower and Sussex Auxiliary 6377 member Jean Miller.



TOP LEFT: Our Teachers of the Year pose as a group following receipt of their awards and very inspiring remarks about the career they are all truly passionate about. From left: Daniel J. Hoppe of Bay Port HS in Green Bay; Timothy R. Nelson of Cochrane-Fountain City ES; Jesse R. Wiltzius of Bay View MS in Green Bay.



BOTTOM LEFT: ES Teacher T. Nelson – A Life Member of Post 10406 in Cochrane, Tim Nelson served in the US Navy during the GWOT. Returning to his alma mater following his service, he teaches Physical Education. He was nominated by his Principal and D9 Cdr. Krist Beseler.



BOTTOM CENTER: MS Teacher J. Wiltzius – Nominated by Mike Sheedy and Post 7534, Jesse Wiltzius incorporates numerous civic, academic and community projects into his Social Studies curriculum. An educator for over 20 years, he truly demonstrates his love for our country in word and deed.



BOTTOM RIGHT: HS Teacher D. Hoppe – Daniel Hoppe was nominated by John Wierer and Post 7534. His passion for teaching Advanced Placement, Comparative Government, and US Govt. classes encourages students to have pride in the American story, demonstrating patriotism and citizenship as they deepen their knowledge.

Thanks to Chair Mel Zehm for info.

RED CARPET AWARDS

★ ★ ★ ★ 2025-2026 Red Carpet Awards ★ ★ ★ ★



Post 664: Division 4 – 3rd: Post 664 Cdr. Brandon Pszanka and QM Tina Flanagan. 101.92%



Post 1866: Division 4 – 4th: Post 1866 Cdr. Richard Wilson. QM Michael Pietsch could not attend. 101.00%



Post 2204: Division 4 – 5th: Post 2204 Cdr. Randy Engness and QM Dennis Degidio. 100.00%



Post 8338: Division 4 – 6th: Post 8338 SVC Jake Sinclair (for Cdr. Roger Bender) and QM Greg Roth. 98.57%



Post 1916: Division 4 – 7th: Post 1916 Cdr. John Noga and QM Wayne Georgeson. 96.61%



Post 9536: Division 5 – 1st: Post 9536 Cdr. Don Radloff. QM David Gentile could not attend. 110.81%



Post 10533: Division 5 – 2nd: Post 10533 Cdr. Jeremy Danner and SVC Brian Connor (for QM John Walker). 107.31%



Post 7896: Division 5 – 3rd: Post 7896 Adj. Robin Fishler (for QM Lee Mau) and Cdr. John Scanlan. 104.87%



Post 3635: Division 5 – 4th: Post 3635 Cdr. Aaron Volling and QM Joseph Mills. 104.16%



District Cdrs: District 9 Cdr. Krist Beseler (98.10%); D9 Cdr. Steve Eisenhauer (95.64%); D1 Cdr. Jim Cairo (101.46%)

Celebrating America's Freedom Event

February 28, 2026 marked the final CAFE conducted by the National VFW Auxiliary. National President Lois Callahan chose the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, DC as the site for the ceremony, not only to honor the service of both her father and her husband, but also for its proximity to the Annual VFW Washington Conference. Thank you to Tina Flanagan for photos.



A beautiful day for a ceremony! From left are: Tina Flanagan (Dual); SVP Charlene Cobb (Dual); VFW COS Keith Lauth; VFW Cdr. Ty Letto; Pres. Kim McWilliams; Chaplain Jennifer Mauritz and PSC Michele Rathke (Dual).



Wisconsin Dept. President Kim McWilliams (center) was escorted by Dept. Chaplain Jennifer Mauritz (left) and Sr. Vice Pres. Charlene Cobb (Dual Member).

Past VFW Surgeon General and WIPSC Renee Simpson addresses the March at the Vietnam Women's Memorial, dedicated to the Nurses and Women of the United States who served in Vietnam. The bronze statues are part of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.



Bonus Army March

What a difference a day or two can make in the weather, and not just in Wisconsin! Following the comparatively balmy days Saturday and Sunday, the VFW commemorated the 1932 Bonus Army March on Washington on Monday. But the much cooler temps and snow did not deter the hearty comrades, many in "silkie's".

The 1932 March involved 43,000 demonstrators – 17,000 of which were WWI Veterans who demanded early redemption

of the World War Adjusted Compensation Certificates issued in 1924, and redeemable in 1945. Impoverishment and unemployment from the Great Depression prompted the demonstration. Unfortunately, the US Army was ultimately called in to clear the marchers' camp. President Herbert Hoover lost his re-election bid in 1932, but finally in 1936, Congress overrode President Roosevelt's veto and the Veterans were paid nine years early. Adam Wallace photos.



VFW Bonus Army Marchers gather at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial for the start of the March, which also included the WWI Memorial and the Korean War Memorial, among others.

RED, WHITE, & BLUE PROGRAM

Supporting the VFW Veterans Service Office

OUR MISSION

The Wisconsin VFW is raising funds to ensure the Veterans Service Office continues to have the necessary resources to continue delivering critical veteran services and assistance.

SCOPE & IMPACT

- ▶ 22,000 VFW Members Assisted
- ▶ 310,000+ Veterans Supported Statewide
- ▶ 22,000 + VA Award Actions
- ▶ \$499 Million in Benefits Secured Each Year

EVERY \$1 DONATED GENERATES \$2,268 IN VETERAN BENEFITS!

PLAQUE RECOGNITION & DONATION LEVELS

RED: \$500 <small>Shared Donor Plaque & Commanders Coin</small>	WHITE: \$1,000 <small>Includes Red Benefits plus a Certificate of Appreciate</small>	BLUE: \$1,500 <small>Includes White Benefits plus your name in VFW Communications</small>	PATRIOT: \$2,000 <small>Includes Blue Benefits plus a personalized plaque presented to you or your organization</small>
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BUILDING A LASTING LEGACY

Each plaque will include a custom coin holder for that year's Commanders coin. With continued annual donations, sponsors will receive the new Commanders coin to add to their plaque, creating a lasting display of ongoing support.

*** Posts or Districts that secure a donation of a local business or entity will receive half of *** the donation money to support their local programs.

JOIN US IN SUPPORTING WISCONSIN VETERANS!

Call HQ: (608) 221-5276 **VFW** Email: RWB@vfwwi.org

Red, White & Blue Supports VSO

The Wisconsin VFW is launching the **Red, White & Blue Program**, a new initiative focused on building stronger partnerships between our Posts, Districts, and local businesses while generating additional support for the work we do on behalf of Veterans.

This program provides a simple, structured way for Posts and Districts to engage small businesses in their communities and invite them to support the Wisconsin VFW through tiered giving levels ranging from \$500 to \$2,000. Participating businesses receive recognition for their commitment to Veterans, including plaques, certificates, and acknowledgment in VFW communications. Each year's Commander's Coin can be added to their display, creating a lasting symbol of continued support, if they renew their support.

Funds raised through the program help sustain the statewide services our members know are critical to Veterans and their families. Each year, our Accredited Service Officers assist with more than 22,000 VA award actions and help secure nearly \$500 million in earned benefits. Every dollar invested generates a powerful return for Wisconsin Veterans.

Just as important, the Red, White & Blue Program strengthens VFW operations at the

local level. When a Post or District secures a donation from a local business or organization, 50 percent of the contribution is returned to support local programs, outreach, and community activities.

This initiative is designed to be practical and member driven. Many businesses are looking for meaningful ways to support Veterans and strengthen their connection to the community. A simple conversation about the impact of the VFW and an invitation to participate can open the door to long-term partnerships.

Posts and Districts are encouraged to start with businesses they already know about, Veteran-owned companies, community partners, and organizations that value service and local impact. Together, through the Red, White & Blue Program, we can expand our community relationships, strengthen our organization at every level, and continue delivering results for Wisconsin Veterans.

An online form for this program, for businesses to fill out and make payments directly will be on the State Website. Be sure to let the business know which Post or District you are from so you get credited properly when they submit the form.

For materials or additional information, contact Wisconsin VFW Headquarters at (608) 221-5276 or RWB@vfwwi.org.

Cootie Corner

Listen Cooties,
I would like to start out with thanks to all who came down to Janesville for Mid-Winter. The year is coming to an end, and we still have time to close it off strong as an All-Star Grand, with attention to our membership.

My last term as Commander was during Covid, and I missed visiting hospitals and going to Cootie Christmas. I've experienced both of them this year and saw what I missed. I plan to attend another Cootie Christmas next year.

Hope to see everyone in Green Bay at Grand Convention. Thank you for the



Hello to All my Cootie Brothers and Sisters!

We are having a great winter vacation (in Cape Coral, FL). It's been a little colder here but better than Wisconsin. Before we know it, our time will be coming to an end and we'll return for Grand Convention. Also, we are in the final months of our Cootie year. I would like to thank each and every one of you for making my year great. I would like to thank the MOC for giving me Commander Brian Rickman this year.

By the time you read this, Auxiliaries should have elected and installed all Officers. All reports should be sent to Grand Secretary Karen Johnson and Supreme Secretary Georg Jean Zimmerman. In addition, Delegates and Alternates forms should be sent to Grand Secretary Karen Johnson by March 20, so things run smoothly at the Grand Convention which is April 10-12, 2026 hosted by Short Arm #23.

Other Reminders:

- Year end reports must be sent to Grand Secretary Karen.
- Names of deceased members and

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



honor to serve as your Grand Commander. Extending my best wishes to Pat Moran for his year ahead as Grand Commander. "Keep 'em Smilin' in Beds of White"!

Brian Rickmann
WI Grand Commander



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



Member of the Year nominations should go to Grand Chaplain Linda Moran.

- Make sure you have sent all donations to the Grand and Supreme so you get credit for awards.
- Lastly, send in your Raffle Tickets - it's the only fundraiser we have.

This is my last note to you! Thank you for all you have done to make this a great year for Commander Brian and me. As we move into a new year, continue to support the new Officers! I wish you all the best. Happy Trails to Everyone!

Connie Lindloff
WI Grand President



WIS 827 Deployment Schedule 2026

as of 19 Feb 2026

Date	Event Name	Display Address	Time
May			
2-May	Military History Day	Military Veterans Museum 4300 Pobereznay Rd Oshkosh, WI 54902	1000-1700
3-May	Hudson Community Expo	Hudson High School 1501 Vine St. Hudson, WI 54016	
16-May	Milwaukee Armed Forces Week - Military Display	Harley Davidson Museum 400 W. Canal St. Milwaukee, WI 53203	0900-1500
July			
3-Jul	Mallards Baseball Game - Not for Profit Spotlight (TENATIVE)	Warner Park (Duck Pond) 1625 Northport Dr. Madison, WI 53704	1300-1800
4-Jul	SUBFEST 2026	Wisconsin Maritime Museum 75 Maritime Drive Manitowoc, WI 54220	0900-1600
30 Jul	Rock County 4H Fair Veterans & Military Appreciation Day	Rock County Fairgrounds 1301 Craig Ave. Janesville, WI 53545	1000-1700
August			
1-2 August	Door County Classic and Wooden Boat Show	West Waterfront Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235	1000-1600
September			
20-Sept	Green County Cheese Days	Courthouse Square 1016 16th Ave. Monroe, WI 53566	1000-1800

COOTIE CORNER

COOTIE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 10-12 MOC/MOCA Grand Convention – Green Bay, WI

June 26-28 5th Annual Cooties Across Borders – Marshfield and Neillsville, WI

■ Baymont by Wyndham – 2107 N. Central Ave., Marshfield, WI 54449 • 715-384-5240 • Mention Cooties/Group 2628) • \$78.32 per night, tax included • Deadline: 15 May, 2026

■ Activities include: Bingo at Riverside Assisted Living, Neillsville • Tours at The Highground Veterans Memorial, Neillsville • Meals and Social time at American Legion 73/VFW 2241, Neillsville (See Cootie e-mailings for registration and details.)

July 30 – Aug. 2 107th MOC Supreme Scratch and 65th MOCA Convention – Nugget Casino Resort, Sparks, NV (Visit lotcs.org for info.)



MOC Grand Raffle Tickets Are Available NOW

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

For tickets, contact:

MOC Raffle Chair "Twiggy" Johnson
920-766-1491 or wilfredjohnson@gmail.com

Keep 'em Smilin' in Beds of White.

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



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ON WISCONSIN!

Ad sponsored by Randy Engness, U.S. Navy and Submarine Veteran

BITS & PIECES

A compendium of things new and noteworthy ...

- A reminder that our National Winners in the Voice of Democracy will be announced in April during the winners trip to the Founding forward Spirit of American in Valley Forge, PA. So stay tuned!
- We are still awaiting the details on the return of Cpl. John J. Ginzl, a Prisoner of War killed on the Enoura Maru on January 9, 1945. Cpl. Ginzl's remains were accounted for on June 11, 2025. His return to Wisconsin for burial in his hometown of Rhinelander is expected to take place in May, 2026.
- The Post, District and Department *Alternative Baseball Caps* approved at the 2025 National VFW Convention are now available for order from the **VFW Store**, in the Uniform Caps and Name Tag section. As noted in JA Webster's column in the January 2026 issue, these caps are an option to the traditional overseas cover during Post meetings, official functions and other specific events.

AND some repeats/reminders...

- Best wishes to Maj. Gen. Brian E. Winski, US Army (Ret.), who will begin his term of service as President and CEO of the War Memorial Center in Milwaukee this spring. A Wisconsin native, Winski retired in 2021 after a distinguished 32-year career, including Command of the renowned 101st Airborne Division. He comes to the War Memorial after a term as President and CEO of the Fort Campbell Historical Foundation, leading a \$40 million effort to build a world-class museum honoring the history and legacy of the units stationed at Fort Campbell. Welcome home sir!
- Great news! After five years of planning and perseverance, the land has been secured for a **SECOND Fisher House in Wisconsin!** Just minutes from the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital in Madison, the House will feature 16 private family suites along with other shared facilities and gathering spaces. The Milwaukee Fisher House has provided over 20,000 nights of lodging and support to military and Veteran families since opening in 2016. **STAY TUNED** – this one is VERY near and dear to the Editor's heart!

FROM THE EDITOR

Once again we find ourselves picking up the pace to complete all we still need to accomplish during the final quarter of our "Make it Count" command year. *Nominations, applications, donations* and registrations all demand our time and attention as do upcoming events – District meetings; Post/District Elections and Installations; the Fifth Annual Day of Service; Memorial Day Tributes and many more.

It sounds a bit overwhelming, and can be if you let it. But the good news: we are not in it alone! When we "stay in our lane" and do our individual "jobs", our efforts pull us together as a TEAM, heading in a unified direction to accomplish the mission.

Do take time to enjoy and celebrate the achievements on display in this issue, and of course, read the leadership messages and other articles meant to *Inform, Inspire, Invite*. Make those extra few contacts to recruit just one (or two!) more members, and shake off the winter weariness to immerse yourself in the great things happening. And don't forget to peg the Fun Meter!

"Make it Count, because you make a difference in the life of a Veteran every single day."

~~~~~

*"Let there be peace on earth  
And let it begin with me."*

~ Jill Jackson-Miller, 1955

**Con-tentious** adjective kən-ˈten(t)-shəs Likely to cause disagreement or argument; exhibiting an often perverse and wearisome tendency to quarrels and disputes.

We seem to be in particularly contentious times, in so many places and with so many issues. Meshing conflicting ideas, beliefs and passions of our very human natures doesn't always go smoothly. And we can feel nearly powerless at the outcome of some events. Comparing the mid-1950s world when Jill Jackson-Miller wrote her timeless lyrics to the present, there are a lot of parallels.

There are no simple answers to our complex issues, but there are simple things that can "begin with us": Breathe. Relax. Focus. Listen. Love. Forgive. Laugh. Remember. Assume good intent.

## Be a NEWS BOOSTER! [vfwwi.org](http://vfwwi.org) - slider page

Greetings VFW members!

It's hard to believe we're almost three months into the new year, which marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of our nation. WDVA has been busy hosting events leading up to the official Semiquincentennial Celebration on July 4th, and Secretary James Bond graciously offered up his column space to me this month so I can tell you a bit about what we've done and what we have planned.

**Christopher Kolakowski**

Director,  
Wisconsin  
Veterans Museum



The whole team at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum is excited by the opportunity this 250th anniversary offers to highlight the role our military, and especially Wisconsin veterans, has played in protecting and shaping our nation since its founding. The celebration will culminate on July 4, 2026, as our nation will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

This is not just about what happened in the 13 colonies, or what happened in 1775, 1776, or the years leading to 1783. Rather, it is about the national journey that started during those years and continues to this day, as we continue to build a more perfect Union.

As Chair of the Wisconsin Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial Commission which was established by the Legislature in 2021, I have had the honor of collaborating with Wisconsinites across the state, including State, Tribal, and business leaders. We are joining hands across Wisconsin – from Superior, to Milwaukee, and everywhere in between – united in our commitment to ensuring that everyone has

## "Portraits of Service" Now Open at Wisconsin Veterans Museum

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum has opened a powerful new exhibit, *Portraits of Service: Wisconsin Warriors from WWI, Korea, and Vietnam*, featuring moving portraits, artifacts and firsthand accounts from 65 Wisconsin Veterans. Open through December 31, 2026, the temporary exhibit showcases the work of award-winning photographer James Gill, who captured intimate portraits of Wisconsin Veterans across the three major conflicts.

Gill's portraits, obtained between 2001 and 2008, were central to the Wisconsin PBS documentary series *War Stories*, which brought the experiences of Veterans into living rooms across the state. Now, visitors will have the opportunity to experience these photographs in a new, immersive museum setting. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum has expanded on Gill's original work by including personal artifacts as well as audio and visual interviews of Veterans telling their stories. Together, these elements provide a deeper context and a more personal connection to the lives behind the portraits.

The exhibit will be available to view from Feb. 6 – Dec. 31, 2026.

Since its creation in 1901, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum has existed to acknowledge, commemorate, and affirm the role of Wisconsin Veterans in the United States of America's military, past and present. The Wisconsin Veterans Museum is an educational activity of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. Directions, museum hours and other info is available at the above link.

the opportunity to be part of this historic milestone.

Last year, we marked the 250th birthdays of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. These and other successful events created momentum for 2026, and we are finalizing plans for Madison and elsewhere in the state. Please stay tuned for more information, which we will share when it becomes

available at [wisvetmuseum.com](http://wisvetmuseum.com) and [wisconsinhistory.org](http://wisconsinhistory.org). Additional information on the National America 250 effort can be found at [america250.org](http://america250.org).

I hope that on your next visit to downtown Madison, you can stop by the Wisconsin Veterans Museum to see our ever-changing, expanding exhibits of Veteran stories. Our next special exhibit,

a partnership with PBS Wisconsin, just opened and will be up all year. [See info elsewhere on this page.]

As always, I am grateful to the VFW and the Auxiliary for their excellent work supporting Veterans across Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Christopher Kolakowski  
Director, Wisconsin Veterans Museum

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS, DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN, AND ITS AUXILIARY  
**2026 WISCONSIN STATE CONVENTION**



June 10th—June 13th, 2026

Holiday Inn Rothschild

1000 Imperial Ave, Rothschild, WI 54474 ~ (715) 355-1111

|                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>VFW</b><br/>VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS</p> <p>Member: _____<br/>Post # _____ Title: _____<br/>Phone # _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$20.00—\$25 After May 22<sup>nd</sup></p> | <p><b>VFW</b><br/>AUXILIARY</p> <p>Member: _____<br/>Aux # _____ Title: _____<br/>Phone # _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$15.00—\$20 After May 22<sup>nd</sup></p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Registration & Reservation Policy**

- Any Post in arrears for any financial obligations to District, Department, and National for fees and dues, failure to have the office of Quartermaster properly bonded, submit properly completed quarterly Trustees Report of Audit, Post Election Report for the ensuring year, or other obligations, will not be eligible to vote but may still attend the Convention.
- This form accommodates up to 1 VFW Member and 1 Auxiliary Member for a total of TWO Convention registrations. Use additional forms for additional Convention registrations. Post and/or Auxiliary members may register additional guests for the Banquet meal by selecting the appropriate quantity number.
- Cut-off date for meal registrations is May 22, 2026.
- Registration and payment MUST reach Dept Headquarters by the **May 22nd Deadline** to avoid higher registration fee.
- No Refunds.**
- Late meal reservations, if accepted, are subject to \$5.00 surcharge per meal
- Make all checks payable to VFW DEPT OF WISCONSIN. Earmark: 2026 Convention. Mail to: VFW OF WISCONSIN, P.O. Box 6128, Monona, WI 53176-0128

Scan the QR Code to Register online (preferred) and book your hotel room. If registering online, you will have the option to print the form and mail it to State Headquarters along with your payment.



**Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup> - Noon**

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>VFW Past Commanders Lunch – Polish Buffet:</b> Sauerkraut Kielbasa, cabbage rolls, baby red potatoes, beef &amp; barley soup, creamy cucumber salad, and dinner rolls. - <b>\$34.00</b></p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Auxiliary Lunch (Open to all Auxiliary) – Homestyle Buffet:</b> Baked Chicken, Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, Stuffing, Buttered Corn, 7-Layer Salad, and Dinner rolls.. - <b>\$30.00</b></p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup>**

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Women Veterans Breakfast (Open to all Women Veterans) ~ 7:00 am - 8:00 am – Rise &amp; Shine Buffet:</b> Scrambled Eggs, English Muffins, Whole Fruit, Sausage Links. - <b>\$25.00</b></p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Auxiliary Club Lunch ~ Noon – Soup, Salad, and Sandwich:</b> Loaded Potato Soup, House Salad, and Club Sandwich. - <b>\$28.00</b></p> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Convention Banquet ~ Cocktails 5:30 pm, Dinner 6:30 pm**

- QTY  **Plated Dinner** – Chicken Cordon Bleu, Sirloin Beef Tips with Mushrooms & Onions, Garlic Roasted Mashed Potatoes, Green Bean Casserole, Caesar Salad. - **\$44.00**

Dietary Restrictions: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Due: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Table mates \_\_\_\_\_



As we shift into our highest gear to finish the year strong, it's time to reserve your place and room and the 2026 State Convention. We don't know who our National Reps will be quite yet, but we know the week will be a wonderful mix of events to honor, celebrate and remember. Some special things are planned to observe the Auxiliary's 100 years of service as well. Here are the details at a glance:

- Wednesday, June 10 – Saturday, June 13, 2026
- Holiday Inn & Suites/Central WI Expo Center – 1000 Imperial Ave., Rothschild, WI 54474
- PREFERRED** method for Registration and Hotel is on the State website- Use the QR code on form **OR** click [2026 Convention](#) to get to there. (You can opt to print the form and mail a check to State HQ, in lieu of credit/debit card.)

**Other Reminders for Post and Auxiliary Delegates**

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

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

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

**Simpson for Commander**

Dear Comrades,  
I am honored and humbled to announce my candidacy for State Commander of the VFW of Wisconsin for 2026-2027, and would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the VFW Post and Auxiliary members for another successful year filled with outstanding projects and actions that have added to our legacy. The events around the globe over the past year have made our work as ambassadors of this great organization even more relevant. I am committed to leveraging our history and expertise to further strengthen our impact.

During the Washington, DC Legislative Conference our attendees saw the importance of our membership, as we navigate the ever-changing legislation for Veterans. It is crucial that we watch legislation that supports or is a detriment to our Veterans and their families. Each of you is vital to our mission to safeguard the benefits that have been earned from our service.

Recruitment and retention are crucial to the future of both our military and Veteran communities to be successful. I firmly believe that by uniting our collective knowledge and resources, we can address these challenges and ensure a stronger, more resilient VFW. It is an honor to contribute to our mission and to work alongside dedicated individuals committed to making a difference.

As a Gold Legacy Life Member of Camp Douglas Memorial VFW Post 10911 in Camp Douglas, I have served in various capacities at Post, District, State, and National levels, including the State VFW Council of Administration and the National VFW Department Inspector Team. The opportunity to assist VFWs in Wisconsin and around the world is both meaningful and deeply rewarding.

My hope is that through the leadership of

Wisconsin at every level, we can lift one another up to be even more successful year after year. I respectfully ask for your continued support and the privilege of your vote at our State Convention in June.

**Stoeber for Sr. Vice**

Greetings Comrades,  
I am excited to announce my candidacy for Department Senior Vice Commander for 2026-2027. My time as your Junior Vice Commander under Commander Letto and SVC

Simpson has reinforced my conviction that I am ready to lead this organization.

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

Although I bring strong leadership skills, and a passion for serving the Veterans of Wisconsin, I want to emphasize this is not about me: it is about honoring the legacy of an organization that has, and continues, to do more for Veterans who have served this great nation.

I am extremely proud to be a member of the VFW, proud of my service in the United States Navy, proud to call each of you my Comrade, and excited to continue my service to the Veterans of Wisconsin. I know that I still have much to learn, and if elected, I will do everything I can to represent this Department to the best of my abilities.

For these reasons, I believe that I am very qualified to be the next Dept. of WI Senior Vice Commander, and I ask for your support and vote at the 2026 State Convention.



**Tilleson for Chaplain**

Comrades,  
As a candidate for re-election to State Chaplain for the 2026-2027 year, I'd like to share some of my background with you.

I enlisted in the Wisconsin Army National Guard after High School in 2001 as an Infantryman, earning the rank of Sergeant E-5. I enjoyed my time in the Army so much so that I attended ROTC while in college and was Commissioned as an Armor Officer in 2005.

I spent the next 5 years working on the full-time side of the National Guard with 2 tours to Iraq, and lots of travel around the US, training other deploying units. After my second tour as a Team Commander, I left for the private sector in 2010, where I've held a variety of management roles in Firefighting, Transportation, Foundry, Manufacturing, and others.

There were some tough years after the military finding my niche in society, but in 2017 I signed up as a Life Member of Badger Post 328 in Stoughton and I've been active ever since 2020. I've served as Post JVC since then and also as District 2 JVC, SVC and Trustee. I elected not to run for D2 Cdr. to serve as State Legislative Chair, which is extremely rewarding and full of adventure.

Our VFW Posts are places to warm the soul, rekindle lost purpose, and remember who we are as Veterans and comrades-in-arms. Each time we gather whether it's at a meeting, a fundraiser, or just over a cup of coffee, we build that sacred circle of fellowship and love in action. Let us grow stronger in membership, louder in advocacy for Veterans' needs, and deeper in our bonds with one another. When we speak with a unified voice, legislators lis-



ten. When we stand shoulder to shoulder, no Veteran stands alone.

I attribute my religion and positive attitude to my success in overcoming difficult times. Bringing smiles, hugs, hot dogs, and flamboyant clothing to VFW functions has brought much joy to this organization and to me. I continue my commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of our members and Veterans across the state, because joy is contagious!

It has been an honor to serve in this sacred office and I look forward to continue my service as your 2026-2027 Wisconsin VFW State Chaplain. I thank you in advance for your vote at our State Convention in June.

**Zehm for Chaplain**

Beloved Comrades,  
I'm announcing my candidacy for the Wisconsin VFW Department Chaplain. I'd like to tell you more about me, my family, and my spiritual vision for this organization.

I grew up in Spooner, a second-generation Veteran. I attended a small church there and was introduced to the gospel there, accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior when I was thirteen.

I enlisted in the Army in 1989, heading to Ft. McClellan, AL as a Military Police Paratrooper. After basic and AIT, I attended Airborne jump school at Ft. Benning before heading to Ft. Bragg, NC. One week later, we went to Panama just prior to Operation Just Cause. After numerous short-term deployments, our unit was deployed to the Middle East for Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm in early August, processing POW's. Assigned to a combat MP unit, I also served as an Investigator.





The Awards Luncheon at the District 7 Winter Meeting is always warmly received, especially this year with frigid January temps. Here, Auxiliary Voice and Pen Chair Sandy Kowalski of Aux. 10262 (back row, left) and D7 Cdr. Dale Dahlke (back, right) pose with the Voice and Pen Student winners; Teachers of the Year; and Bob Munro Service Award winners. Thanks to Tina Flanagan for the photo.



Waterloo-Marshall VFW Post 6614 recognized their Patriot's Pen winners at their meeting. From left are: Cdr. Dave Behling; Addie Olson (2nd); Chairman Pete Ponti; and Margaret Rosa Robinson (1st). The Third place student was unable to attend. Thank you Pete.



ABOVE LEFT: During the 12th annual Veterans Day celebration at Elkhorn Area High School, Elkhorn Memorial VFW Post 6375 Commander Scott Weber presented certificates and cash awards to two outstanding students in front of the school staff, student body, family, friends and local Veterans. Here (from left) are: 2nd Place Winner Charlotte Meyer, Commander Scott Weber, and 1st Place Winner Lilly Hartmann. Congratulations! Thanks to Post 6375 SVC Tim Gudge.

ABOVE RIGHT: Mueller-Hintz VFW Post and Auxiliary 1866 held an Awards Pizza Party at the Marshfield Eagles Club for their Pen and Voice students. From left are: Commander Dick Wilson, Pen winner Lennon Schmidt, Voice winner Deepna Neelagiri and Aux. Pres. and Chairman Mary Lou Duerr, who supplied the photo and info.

AT LEFT: Post and Auxiliary 8584 include their annual Student Essay Awards in their Veterans Day Program at Cashton High School. From left are: Auxiliary Chairman Nadine Carpenter, Ivy Schmitz, Mya Dahl, Audrey Weber and Post 8584 Commander Tom Lee. Thank you Rita Byers.

## Zehm

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

Upon completion of my initial enlistment, I attended UW-Eau Claire for Criminal Justice and later worked as a Juvenile Treatment Counselor. My wife Darcee and I have three kids and reside in Hammond. We are long-time attenders of Faith Community Church in Hudson where I have volunteered for over 20 years, leading and teaching youth Christian education classes, the AWANA ministry, ushering, and serving with the safety team. The Lord has allowed me to progress in leadership roles in each area, while continuing to serve in our local VFW.

I'm a member of VFW Post 10818, and current Life Member since 2011, where I have served as the Post Chaplain for nearly 15 years and the District 9 Chaplain for over 3 years. I have the honor to be the Post and District 9 Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen, and Teacher of the Year (TOTY) Chairman, and the Department

TOTY Chairman. I've led numerous Community Service projects, assisted in several life crises interventions, and presided over Veterans' funerals. My highest calling in life has been to lead others as a mentor and friend, and as a people person who loves to encourage others, especially Veterans.

This position desperately needs a spiritual leader, and as Chaplain, my mission is to build strong relationships with the VFW districts and posts and be available for spiritual counsel. I plan to help guide our Post and District Chaplains through quarterly training as I expand my knowledge from other Chaplains by attending national and local training sessions. Endorsed by Past National Chaplains Peter Hook and Debb Halter, as well as our Post and District 9 members, I am here to serve Veterans by providing spiritual guidance, encouragement, and compassion as the Lord guides. Let's grow and heal together as comrades, as we seek the Lord's guidance.

### FROM THE FRONTLINES

#### New Monthly Communications Initiative

The Department of Wisconsin VFW Communications Committee is launching **From the Frontlines**, a new monthly video communicate created to keep members better informed and connected across the Department. State Commander Ty Leto introduced **From the Frontlines** in his January message, which many members may have already heard at their District or Post meeting during the Reading of Communications.

**From the Frontlines** is a brief video released each month covering timely topics such as Department initiatives; available programs and resources; legislative updates; membership and leadership information; and important upcoming

events. This initiative was developed in response to member feedback requesting clearer and more consistent communication.

To help make this effort successful, members are encouraged to play the video at District and Post meetings. A permanently assigned QR code and active hyperlink direct viewers to the Department of Wisconsin VFW YouTube channel, where **From the Frontlines** and other official videos are available on demand.

These videos are strongly encouraged to be viewed during the Reading of Communications at District and Post meetings and will also be featured on the Department website and other digital platforms as communications efforts continue to expand.

**For more information, contact Communications Chairman Krist Beseler at 507-459-3238 or KristB@vfwwi.org.**



## Filling the Boot in Combined Locks



Combined Locks Auxiliary 10544 is proud to partner with Kamps Bar and Grill in Combined Locks to FILL the BOOT. The Dept. Auxiliary Fundraiser has been very successful around the state. Aux. President Karen Janssen displays the boot in this fine photo supplied by sis Sally Lamers.

## Children's Christmas Thank You



VFW Dept. VAVS Rep. Rod Fifield (left) and Auxiliary Rep. Audrey Dotzauer (right) presented donations for Walmart Gift Cards to Priscilla Larson of Voluntary Services at Oscar G. Johnson VAMC in Iron Mountain, MI, for Children's Christmas 2025.

Thank you to all who donated to the 2025 "Children's Christmas" at Oscar G. Johnson VA and its Branch Clinics. You helped make the holidays MUCH brighter for many Veterans and their families!

Dept. of WI Aux. • Dept. of MI Aux. • District 8 Aux. • VFW and Aux. 2063, Crivitz • VFW and Aux. 2113, De Pere • VFW 2778, Appleton • VFW and Aux. 2895, Cudahy • Aux. 6705, Denmark • VFW and Aux. 7534, Village Of Howard • Aux. 7692, Freedom • Aux. 9202, Germantown Memorial • Aux. 9677, Bellevue • Aux. 10544, Heart Of The Valley • VFW 1039, Menomonie • MOC and MOCA, Grand of Wisconsin • MOC and MOCA Pup Tent #23, Green Bay • DAV Of Wisconsin, Bryon Boehmke • Military Order of The Purple Heart Auxiliary 789, Chassell, MI • Netzel-Zenz American Legion Post 413, Crivitz • Nancy Malewiski • Audrey Dotzauer • Karen Blashka • Judith Floistad • Ginger Renier • Keitha Callanan



Germantown Police Chief Patrick Merten (left) and Officer of the Year Sgt. Cody Farnsworth.



Continuing their long-standing tradition of supporting the Germantown Police Dept. are (from left): Post 9202 QM John Schaezel; Aux. Treasurer Mary Brown; Police Chief Patrick Merten.

## Honoring Public Servants in Germantown

Germantown VFW Post and Auxiliary 9202 held its Annual Awards Banquet to honor two outstanding Public Servants. Police Sgt. Cody Farnsworth was named as Officer of the Year and Firefighter Craig Rossman (not pictured) received Firefighter/EMT of

the Year recognition. Rossman is retiring in April after 28 years of distinguished service. Post 9202 enjoys very cooperative and supportive relationships with both Departments.

Submitted by Post 9202 QM John Schaezel.

## Teaming Up in Clintonville



VFW Post 664 and American Legion Post 63 of Clintonville worked together conducting a Hygiene Drive for D Company, 2 Battalion 127 Infantry. Community donations were prepared for shipment by VFW/Legion Dual Member Tina Wilson, and AL Post 63 Cdr. Jim Carmody (left) and VFW Post 664 Cdr. Brandon Pszanka delivered the packages to the Post Office to be sent to the deployed unit. Extra items received were donated to King Veterans Home.

Submitted by AL Post 63 Adjutant Peter Bodoh.

## Sharing the Spirit in Adams



Adams VFW Auxiliary 6279 co-sponsored a Holiday Giving Tree with Aging and Disability Services of Adams County and over 70 people received gifts to brighten their holidays. Initiated by Monica Mallard (not pictured), others involved included (from left): Sara Petersen; President Marge Edwards; Sarah Manning; Emily Wilbur and Diane Van Beek. Thanks to D7 President Jane Bynum for securing the photo and info of this great idea!

## Thanking TCC in Strum



Auxiliary 6550 member and Past Dept. Pres. Inez Semingson, (left) presented a US flag to Tri-County Communications (TCC) in Strum, in appreciation of their many years of volunteering and assisting with the Post's Annual Chicken Dinner Fundraiser. *Thank you to Joan Guenther.*

## The Spirit of Service in Cudahy



Cdr. Letto, President McWilliams and a host of other Dept., District and Post/Aux. leadership gathered in Cudahy in early February for a Holiday/Winter Luncheon. "Ty's Travelogue" indicated the afternoon was filled with "great food, gift giving, cake cutting, laughter, and a few well-earned shenanigans, all while raising funds for important nonprofit initiatives". The Post donated \$500 to Campfire for Courage and an anonymous individual donor immediately matched the contribution so that two more Veterans/family members can attend a Healing Retreat. That's "Making it Count" in action!

## Red Carpet Awards in Shawano



Since Post 2723 could not attend the Mid-Winter Conference, District 7 Cdr. Dale Dahlke (left) presented Cdr. Thomas Hoffman (center) and QM Phillip Nelson with their Red Carpet Award certificates at their beautiful new Post Home. Post 2723 is at 109.43% membership currently. *Thank you Dale!*

## Best Wishes in Viroqua



Members of VFW Post 3032 made their annual holiday visits to 46 Veterans at several Viroqua area nursing homes, bearing cards, gifts and other items, and thanking them for their service. One of the Veterans visited was VFW member George (Doc) Piper, a Veteran of World War II, who just celebrated his 101st Birthday. Known to many in the community, he was the local veterinarian for many years. Wishing Doc a happy 101st (standing, l-r) are: QM Eric Sherry, Chaplain Mark Volden and Cdr. Keith Yahn. *Thank you Eric!*

## Giving Back at Bay Port HS



Duck Creek VFW Post 7534 Commander Bruce Jagodinsky proudly presented a Thank You certificate and a \$500 donation to the Bay Port High School FFA on behalf of the Post, to recognize the students' outstanding support and hard work during the Post's Veterans Day Breakfast. Their willingness to volunteer their time and energy helped make the event a success and ensure all felt welcomed and appreciated. Post 7534 is grateful for the continued partnership with Bay Port High School FFA and the example these students set through service and leadership. *Thanks to Bruce Sorensen.*

## Teaching Flag Etiquette in Stevens Point



Plover VFW Post 10262 Adjutant Norb Strasser (right) and Chaplain Bob Decker recently conducted a Flag Retirement presentation for Boy Scouts of America Troop 298 of Stevens Point at Holy Spirit Parish. Adjutant Strasser discussed history and meaning of the Flag, Flag Etiquette and respectful retirement of unserviceable Flags. The Post is planning to enlist the participation of Scout Troop 298 in a Flag Retirement Ceremony planned for this spring. *Thank you to Deb Manthey.*

## Raffle Calendar Winners

| Date    | Ticket     | Name           | City            | Prize |
|---------|------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|
| Jan. 2  | 5311       | K. McNulty     | Neenah          | \$400 |
|         | 2115       | A. Yarnot      | Whitefish Bay   | \$50  |
| Jan. 9  | 10264      | K. Cole        | Chetek          | \$50  |
|         | 9494       | J. Effa        | Little Chute    | \$50  |
|         | 345        | C. Hinds       | Janesville      | \$50  |
|         | 5583       | K. Puls        | Germantown      | \$50  |
|         | 5608       | D. Canon       | Oshkosh         | \$50  |
|         | 10905      | M. Eckhoff     | Phillips        | \$50  |
|         | 5768       | M. Fagg        | Chilton         | \$50  |
| Jan. 16 | 2042       | K. Haen        | Sturgeon Bay    | \$50  |
|         | 10664      | W. Morrison    | Chippewa Falls  | \$50  |
|         | 1036       | C. Bernhard    | Theresa         | \$50  |
|         | 10896      | J. Zagar       | Lac du Flambeau | \$50  |
|         | 11270      | VFW 3032       | Viroqua         | \$50  |
|         | 12927      | G. Jensen      | Marshall        | \$50  |
|         | 12505      | L. Stiefvater  | Two Rivers      | \$50  |
| Jan. 23 | 14052      | VFW Post 10911 | Camp Douglas    | \$50  |
|         | 12049      | C. Behnk       | Manitowoc       | \$50  |
|         | 4295       | D. Wildes      | West Allis      | \$50  |
|         | 14109      | C. Sell        | Beaver Dam      | \$50  |
|         | 7411       | J. Spencer     | Marshfield      | \$50  |
|         | 5551       | S. Vanderberg  | Waupun          | \$50  |
|         | 9635       | P. Van Wychen  | Kaukauna        | \$50  |
|         | Jan. 30    | 7149           | S. McCullick    | Boyd  |
| 12685   |            | G. Knipfer     | Stoughton       | \$50  |
| 2566    |            | S. Jensen      | Pewaukee        | \$50  |
| 10471   |            | B. Long Acre   | Birchwood       | \$50  |
| 291     |            | F. Lietz       | Edgerton        | \$50  |
| 1295    |            | R. Boyd        | Rockford, IL    | \$50  |
| 10219   |            | J. Smoczyk     | Thorp           | \$50  |
| Feb. 6  | 12019      | K. Behringer   | Manitowoc       | \$300 |
|         | 10927      | M. Harding     | Phillips        | \$50  |
|         | 7429       | J. Mills       | Florence        | \$50  |
|         | 5882       | B. Block       | Brandon         | \$50  |
|         | 9994       | K. Juleff      | Clayton         | \$50  |
|         | 7478       | S. Hersant     | Tigerton        | \$50  |
| Feb. 13 | 9243       | K. Garuy       | Freedom         | \$50  |
|         | 1690       | H. Wole        | Columbus        | \$500 |
|         | 14017      | C. Olenski     | McHenry, IL     | \$50  |
|         | 11307      | T. Flaig       | Tomah           | \$50  |
|         | 2041       | T. Baudhuin    | Sturgeon Bay    | \$50  |
|         | 3673       | E. Nelson      | La Crosse       | \$50  |
|         | 46         | D. Gorsuch     | Bristol         | \$50  |
| Feb. 20 | 7454       | J. Burlon      | Shawano         | \$50  |
|         | 7492       | C. Flugaur     | Rosholt         | \$50  |
|         | 6720       | C. Dornbrack   | Merrill         | \$50  |
|         | 9956       | D. Freeland    | Knapp           | \$50  |
|         | 3730       | R. Reuter      | Potosi          | \$50  |
|         | 3973       | Z. Ingersoll   | Cuba City       | \$50  |
|         | 13404      | S. Paff        | Mukwonago       | \$50  |
| Feb. 27 | 4921       | D. Baker       | Milwaukee       | \$50  |
|         | 195        | J. Miller      | Burlington      | \$50  |
|         | 4413       | D. Plantiko    | Eagle           | \$50  |
|         | 5683       | R. Buehler     | West Bend       | \$50  |
|         | 6171       | J. Liermann    | Cascade         | \$50  |
|         | 7382       | F. Powell      | Villa Park, CA  | \$50  |
|         | 2435       | L. Blommer     | Green Bay       | \$50  |
| 11348   | D. Isensee | Sparta         | \$50            |       |

Raffle Winners are also posted on the VFW State Website – [vfwwi.org](http://vfwwi.org) – after the Friday drawings at VFW State HQ. Click on NEWS, then on VFW RAFFLE CALENDAR NEWS.

## EVENTS AND DEADLINES

- March 31** **Deadline** for \$.50 per member **Newspaper Fee** from Posts (*Pay online*)
- April 3** **Deadline** for Nominations for the **WI VFW Member of the Year** – *online applications only; login in to MEMBERS ONLY, then click on ON-LINE Forms.*
- April 6** **Deadline** for May/June 2026 *Wisconsin VFW News* (*Printed and mailed*)
- April 11** **District 4 Meeting – Auxiliary ONLY** – 9:00 am (Regis. 8:30 am) – Greendale Police Dept., 5911 W. Grange Ave., Greendale, WI 53129  
**Rep: SVP Cobb**
- April 18** **District 10 Meeting – VFW and Auxiliary** – 9:00 am (Regis. 8:00 am) – VFW Post 5729, 240 S. 8th St., Medford, WI 54451  
**Rep: CDR Letto and Sec. Elford**
- April 25** **District 1 Meeting – VFW ONLY** – 9:30 am – VFW Post 1621, 989 Legion Dr. (AL Post 544), Twin Lakes, WI 53181.  
**Rep: CDR Letto**
- April 25** **District 2 – VFW and Auxiliary** – 9:00 am (Regis. 8:00 am) – VFW Post 5716, 17980 W. Beloit Rd., New Berlin, WI 53151  
**Reps: COS Lauth and Pres. McWilliams**
- April 25** **District 6 Meeting – VFW ONLY** – 10:00 am (Regis. 9:00 am) – hosted by VFW Post 6709 at the Waupun Community Center, 520 McKinley St., Waupun, WI 53963  
**Rep: SVC Simpson**
- April 25** **District 9 Meeting – VFW and Auxiliary** – hosted by VFW Post 10406 at Cochrane-Fountain City School – S2770 State Road 35, Fountain City, WI 54629  
**Schedule:** 8:30 am Regis.; 9:30 am – OTI (VFW) and Training (Aux.); 12 noon – Lunch, followed by a Joint Memorial Service; 1:00 pm – both District meetings.  
**Reps: JVC Stoeber and SVP Cobb**
- April 25** **District 11 Meeting – VFW and Auxiliary** – 9:00 am (Regis. 8:00 am) –  
• VFW @ Post 3032, 751 S. Washington St., Viroqua, WI 54665  
• Auxiliary @ Viroqua Eagles Club, 216 S. Rock Ave., Viroqua, WI 54665  
**Reps: Surgeon Thomsen and Chaplain Mauritz**
- April 26** **District 3 Meeting – VFW ONLY** – 10:00 am (Regis. 9:00 am) – VFW Post 10533, 204 E. High St., Shullsburg, WI 53586  
**Rep: JVC Stoeber**
- April 30** **Deadline** for Post Audits to State Headquarters
- April 30** **Deadline** for Post Election Report and Delegate Report (online)
- May 1** **Deadline** for All-State Packets to State Headquarters
- May 2** **District 7 Meeting – VFW and Auxiliary** – 10:00 am (Regis. 9:00 am) – VFW Post 1638, 601 Johnston St., Merrill, WI 54452 – *advance reservation needed for noon meal*  
**Reps: SVC Simpson and Pres. McWilliams**
- May 2** **District 8 Meeting – VFW and Auxiliary** – SCHEDULE:  
8:00 – 10:00 am – *Veterans Against Hunger Food Drive*  
10:00 am – **Registration** for lunch and meetings  
11:00 am – **Lunch**  
1:30 pm – **VFW and Auxiliary Meetings**  
**LOCATION for all events:** Cotter Family Gathering Center, 518 Meadow Lane, Wrightstown, WI 54180  
**Reps: JVC Stoeber and JVP Southworth**
- May 9** **District 4 Meeting – VFW ONLY!** – VFW Post 8482 – 9:00 am (Regis. 8:30 am) – at AL Post 434, 9327 S. Shepard Ave., Oak Creek, WI 53154  
**Rep: JVC Stoeber**
- May 15** **Deadline** for applications for WI VFW Foundation Grants.
- June 10-13** **VFW/VFWA Dept. of Wisconsin State Conventions** – Holiday Inn & Suites/Central WI Expo Center, 1000 Imperial Ave., Rothschild, WI 54474  
*(See page 3 Planning Calendar for Hotel reservation info, and page 18 for Meals and Registration info.)*

# In Combat in Korea

by Ryan Walkowski and Ed Gruber

It was a Police Action...a war in all but its name, that became "The Forgotten War". How can a war — labeled a Police Action costing millions of lives, traumatizing countless other individuals, and razing cities and villages — be forgotten? Despite its widespread effects, the Korean War received less media attention than World War II with its global scope, and the Vietnam War with its stormy protests and inglorious conclusion. Forgotten, because it was overshadowed by the Cold War which followed WWII. And, because nobody gave a damn — except those who were there. The bewildered, yet courageous young men who left their homes and loved ones for a foreign land, to engage in ferocious battles under the grimmest and

grisliest weather and topographic conditions.

Now is the time for these grizzled warriors to share their accounts. Those who remain are in their nineties, with stories that must be told, so that a war which cost almost 1,300,000 American and United Nations deaths and wounded, plus millions of civilian casualties, is not forgotten.

Enter young Ryan Walkowski, a self-described "blue collar electrician and valve technician" who learned all he could about the Korean War, then took on a mission to ensure this war would be remembered, interviewing Korean War Veterans who recounted the most terrifying times of their lives. Walkowski and author Ed Gruber, a Navy and Korean War Veteran, sought to present these stories

of battles in frigid and monsoon conditions, rugged mountains and muddy paddies, and bugle-blaring enemies attacking in waves.

Blunt, profane, hesitant, and tearful, these firsthand accounts provide a stark reminder of the immense devastation that was the Korean War. Ryan gently and mindfully interviewed these Veterans, letting each speak in his own way, at his own pace, and in his own words.

*In Combat in Korea* is available from several online booksellers, among them: [McFarland Books](http://McFarlandBooks.com), and [Amazon](http://Amazon.com). Walkowski's next book is about the Vietnam War, from Veterans who lived it.

If you're interested in sharing your story with him, you can email at [Ryan.author1993@gmail.com](mailto:Ryan.author1993@gmail.com).

Eighteen Veterans  
Remember the War

# In Combat in Korea



Ryan Walkowski  
and Ed Gruber

# MEL ZEHM

Candidate for Wisconsin  
VFW State Chaplain  
2026-2027



- ★ VFW Life Member, 15 Year Member
- ★ Army Desert Storm Veteran
- ★ Post 10818 & District 9 Chaplain
- ★ Veteran Advocate
- ★ Christ Follower, Servant Leader
- ★ Consistent, Steady, Trusted

*"Here to serve those who have served."*

**Vote Mel for  
Department Chaplain**

# RE-ELECT JORDAN TILLESON STATE CHAPLAIN 2026-2027

- † WI ANG 2001-2010;  
two tours in Iraq
- † Gold Legacy Life Member  
of VFW Post 328
- † Post JVC; D2 Trustee &  
Past JVC, SVC
- † State Legislative Chair  
2023-present
- † State Chaplain  
2025-present



Dedicated  
Passionate  
Energetic

Thank you for your support and vote at the 2026 State Convention!

# James Cairo

CANDIDATE FOR  
STATE JR. VICE COMMANDER  
2026-2027



## Why I am running for Jr. Vice Commander:

My vision is to strengthen the Wisconsin VFW by ensuring financial accountability and fiscal responsibility to secure our Department's long-term stability. I am committed to championing family-focused, Veteran-centric initiatives that enhance our organization's role in improving leadership, I will empower local Posts to boost membership, increase fundraising and advocacy, I will amplify the needs of Posts and Districts, raising awareness of the VFW's vital support for our comrades. Additionally, I pledge to bolster our Service Office, advance Legislative priorities, and reinforce membership initiatives, all while upholding the noble mission of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.



Wisconsin



# Mid-Winter Snapshots



LEFT: Camaraderie = a pegged Fun Meter! RIGHT: Immediate Past Dept. Pres. Cheryl Woodards received her keepsake volume of the 2024-2025 VFW NEWS issues from SVC/NEWS Chair Renee Simpson and Cdr. Ty Letto.



LEFT: Madison VAVS Rep. Adrianna Marks of Aux. 7591 displays a t-shirt she is giving to the Women Veterans she meets. RIGHT: Membership Team members gathered for a photo in their "Recruit Wisconsinbly" shirts. Front (l-r): Carla McAndrew; Randy Meyer; Michele Rathke; Michelle Leick-Leurquin. Back (l-r): Paul Morrison; Randy Engness; Keith Lauth; Dan Southworth and Jason Coffey.



LEFT: The \$5,500 check presented by the Auxiliary at the Banquet represents the \$1 per member donation collected from participating Auxiliaries. RIGHT: A new event this year was a casual Ice Cream Social for the winning essay students, prior to the evening Banquet festivities. Photo by G. Metz.



LEFT: Aux. Dept. President Kim McWilliams welcomes Cdr. Letto to the Auxiliary meeting on Saturday. CENTER: Auxiliary NDCM #11 Renee' Quinn of Iowa addresses the Saturday evening Banquet. RIGHT: Sr. Vice Cdr.-in-Chief Cory Geisler (left) studies the framed Vote Tally from his historic election at the 2025 National Convention, as JVC George Stoeber explains and Cdr. Ty Letto looks on in appreciation.

*Photos by State Photographer  
Sherri L. Smith*