

Legionnaire

Volume C

Number 3



American Legion Legislative Priorities



Each year, The American Legion selects about a dozen priority items to present to Congress that impact active-duty military, veterans, and their families. These priorities are chosen based off of the positions and views of its 1.6 million members. Once released the 2024 legislative priorities can be found at www.legion.org/washingtonconference/legislativepriorities.

These priorities align with the ideals of The American Legion: Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, VA Healthcare Modernization, PACT Act Implementation and Oversight, Protecting Veterans from Predatory Actors, Military Quality of Life, and Protecting the American Flag. To support these priorities and lobby the members of Congress, members from all 55 American Legion Departments make their way to Washington DC every February to participate in the Washington Conference. During this conference, The American Legion Family members visit with their State Senators and Representatives to see how they plan on voting on the priorities and why they feel the way they do about them. Nebraska will have more than fifteen members from The American Legion Family who will be attending the Conference and will be meeting with the State's representatives.

In Nebraska, the Nebraska Veterans Council (NVC) hosts its own version of Washington Conference on the state level. The NVC is made up of members of The American Legion;

Veterans of Foreign Wars; Disabled American Veterans; Vietnam Veterans of America; American Veterans; The Military Order of the Purple Heart; Paralyzed Veterans of America; the Marine Corp League; and the County Veterans Service Officer Association of Nebraska. The NVC chose four bills that they support. They invited the Senators who submitted the bill to come and speak to the group. The priority bills chosen this year were LB 869, to change provisions relating to services of the county veterans service committees; LB 1037 is to prohibit unethical conduct and improper collection of fees relating to assistance or referrals in veteran's benefits matters; LB 126, changing provisions relating to homestead exemptions; and LB 853 having to do with a homestead exemption credit for disabled veterans.

The day served as an avenue for the Veteran Service Organization members to talk to their State Senators and see how he or she is planning to vote. Following the session, members from all organizations were encouraged to go and talk to their own State Senator to see how they stood on the priority bills. Thank you to everyone who attended and made the day a success.

2024 Department Convention Location Change

The 2024 Department Convention will be held June 20 - 23 at the Holiday Inn in Kearney. This is a change in location from the information previously sent out. The DEC will meet at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 20 and at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, June 21. The Joint Session will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, June 21 and the Legion Convention will begin at 3:00 p.m. and go through Sunday, June 23.

The Holiday Inn is located at 110 Second Avenue. Rooms are \$149.95 a night. Call the hotel at 308-237-5971 to make your reservation. Do not book your room online or use the toll free number, you will not get the Legion rate.

The Convention Registration fee is \$10. Delegate and Alternate cards will be mailed to the Post Adjutant in May. Be sure to bring the signed card for registration. Contact Adjutant Salak with any questions about the Convention.

From the Desk of the Department Adjutant DUES INCREASE!

At the 2023 National Convention in Charlotte, the convention body voted for a \$5.00 National dues increase that will go into effect on July 1, 2024. The last National dues increase was back in 2016. At our Department Convention in Kearney in June of 2024, it is highly likely a Department dues increase resolution is going to be voted on as well. This should not be a surprise to anyone as the Finance Officer briefed it to the convention body at our 2023 Department Convention in Kearney. The last Department dues increase came in 2018.

I understand no one likes dues increases but these minor increases are needed from time-to-time.

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

The Nebraska Legionnaire
150 NW 40th St, Unit A
Lincoln, NE 68528

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

2024 MEMBERSHIP GOAL: 23,418 JANUARY 15 TH TOTAL: 19,964 - 85.25%

DISTRICT 1 - 91.57%	DISTRICT 15 - 89.16%	DISTRICT 7 - 89.12%	DISTRICT 8 - 86.02%	DISTRICT 2 - 85.51%
DISTRICT 3 - 84.81%	DISTRICT 11 - 84.60%	DISTRICT 12 - 84.41%	DISTRICT 5 - 83.42%	DISTRICT 6 - 83.37%
DISTRICT 10 - 82.83%	DISTRICT 4 - 81.93%	DISTRICT 13 - 77.95%	DISTRICT 9 - 74.82%	






Commander's Corner

John-Henry Percy
Department Commander

Before we start the New Year off, let me start off by hoping and wishing that all of you and your families had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year celebration. According to our recent membership report as of December 2023, we closed out the year at 83% of our goal. With just



Adjutant Dave Salak presented Commander Percy with a gift from the Department.



over 15% left in our membership drive ... I believe we can obtain a 100% by the end of February – let us all shoot for that goal. We dropped down from number eight (8) in the national membership poll to number twelve (12). There are quite a few posts that need less than ten members to reach 100%. I want to recognize those posts that achieved 100% or more by the end of December 2023. These posts include: Arthur Post 207, Butte Post 51, Cody Post 319, Columbus Post 84, Cook Post 360, Crawford Post 138, Davenport Post 335, Dubois Post 39, Lisco Post 309, Palisade Post 318, Odell Post 231, Red Cloud Post 238, and Steele City Post 349. Thank you to all the commanders and adjutants from these posts for doing a great job on your membership drive. Remember come February 1st all members who have not renewed become delinquent; so, let's get these other members renewed – so they can stay members in good standing.

Let me say that the first six months of my year in office has gone by quickly. I have enjoyed representing the Department of Nebraska and will continue to perform my very best in representing all legionnaires until our Department Convention in June 2024. Upcoming is our Mid-Winter Conference in Kearney. During this event our National Vice-Commander Vail will be attending our conference. I hope to see as many legionnaires there as possible.

Programs we need to be thinking about this time of year include selecting our juniors in high schools for both Boys/Girls State and Junior Law Cadet. Boys/Girls state is a very valuable program that allows our junior boys/girls to learn about our state form of government to include leadership. It is not too early to start thinking about this falls Oratorical Contest and remind the counselors that it is also a scholarship program. The Oratorical Contest is not limited to just juniors in High School. Freshmen through seniors can participate.

I like to remind everyone of the new mission that is being driven by our National Commander Seehafer with the support of our National President Williamson and National SAL Commander Hall called BE THE ONE. A simple acronym to remember is ALR. The "A" stands for "Ask" a veteran how they are doing. The "L" stands for "Listen" a very critical step. The "R" stands for "Refer" the individual who is in a crisis and needs help. Lastly, I am adding an "F" to the mix which stands for "Follow-up" so the individual does not feel like they are being left alone, but realize we will always be there for them.

"Lead by Mentoring"

Rider's Rally

John Arias
Department ALR Liaison

Fellow Riders,

I know that you have put in a lot of miles, hours, donated hundreds of dollars individually and your Chapters have served their communities this past year.

My Assistant Liaison, Danny Stefka, reported that since June of 2023, the Western Region Chapters have ridden over 100,000 miles, attended funeral flag lines, stood flag lines for Quilts of Valor, participated in parades, Veterans Day programs, visited the Western Nebraska Veterans Home, conducted poker runs, and have donated thousands of dollars.

Chapter Post 34 raised money for the new Legion Post roof and the Gordon Veteran Memorial Park and raised and donated money for the Sons of the American Legion Honor Guard. Danny started two Rider chapters, Bayard Chapter 200 was Chartered in May 2023, and performed Quilts of Valor in Bayard and Bridgeport. The Chapter also performed their first poker run raising \$1,200.00. Congratulations to this new Chapter. The second Chapter, Crawford Chapter 138 was Chartered, and they served breakfast for the Veterans of Post 138.

Congratulations to Danny for starting two more Chapters and is still working on a third. Thank you, Western Region Riders, for all the work you do for your Community and State. A couple of you even rode the 2023 Legacy Run from Kokom, IN to Charlotte, NC. Good job!

I participated in Chapter 53's burger night and got to cook some burgers. Next month, I believe we will be doing it again. It's a lot of hard work but luckily for me, it only lasts an hour. Tuesday is Burger Night at the Grand Island Vets Club. Hope to see y'all there!

I know other Chapters in the other three regions have done a lot of work also, but I have not received any reports from the Directors so I could not include it this this article.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at johnpaularias32@gmail.com or give me a call at 308-352-6824. If I don't answer, it's probably snowing and I'm on a snowplow clearing roads. Leave a message and I'll get back to you.

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Senior Vice Commander.....Boyd Yochum, Ashland
Area A Vice Commander.....Robert Neel, Winside
Area B Vice Commander.....Don Patras, Columbus
Area C Vice Commander.....Brendan Moore, Lincoln
Area D Vice Commander.....Judy Walters, Ainsworth
Adjutant.....Dave Salak, Lincoln
Programs Director.....Eric Martin, Lincoln
Chaplain.....Fr. Alexander Borzych, St. Paul
Historian.....Jennifer Laux, Omaha
Judge Advocate.....William Harris, Omaha
Finance Officer.....Mark Novak, Dawson
Sergeant-At-Arms.....David Guy, Papillion
Service Officer.....Levi Bennett, Lincoln
National Executive Committeeman.....Fred Craigie, Lincoln
Alternate NECman.....Jim Costello, Bellevue

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Dist. 2.....Kelly Hanvey, Center
Dist. 3.....Nick Tramp, Allen
Dist. 4.....Steve Stanec, Alliance
Dist. 5.....Scott Bell, North Platte
Dist. 6.....Burdette Chappell, Kearney
Dist. 7.....Adam Schweitzer, Fremont
Dist. 8.....Rich Klinger, Omaha
Dist. 9.....Ron Wiest, Moorefield
Dist. 10.....Don Nelson, Clay Center
Dist. 11.....Tom Crisman, Crete
Dist. 12.....Martin Neal, Hickman
Dist. 13.....Scott Buss, Sterling
Dist. 15.....Bruce Gubser, Lincoln



**The NEBRASKA
Legionnaire**

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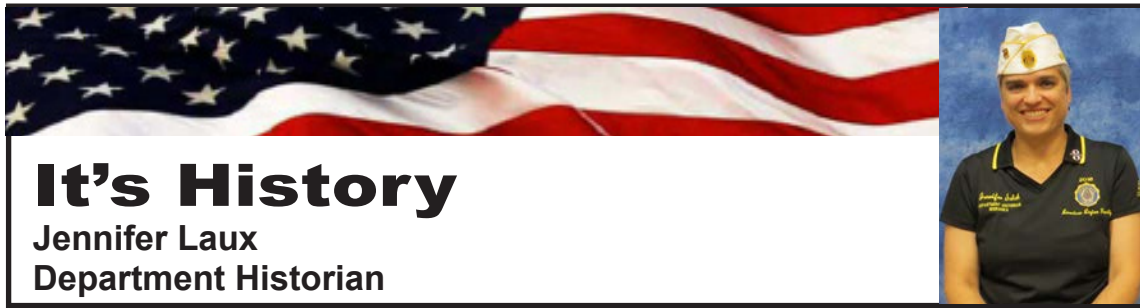
**Did you know you can read the Nebraska Legionnaire online at
www.nebraskalegion.net?**

If you would rather receive the Nebraska Legionnaire by email or view it online, send in this form. The email and online edition of the newspaper is usually available a week or so before the paper arrives in your mailbox. All we need from you is your email address.

I no longer wish to receive a printed copy of the Nebraska Legionnaire.

Name: _____
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Member ID: _____

Mail this form to The American Legion, 150 NW 40th Street, Unit A, Lincoln, NE 68528, or you can email the information to **cfoutz@nebraskalegion.net**



It's History
Jennifer Laux
Department Historian



Straight Talk
Levi Bennett
Department Service Officer

American Legion Department of Nebraska History Word Search

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

Directions: Search up, down, forward, backward, and on the diagonal to find the bolded, underlined words described below.

February 1933 (91 years ago)

- **FRIENDSHIPS** ceased between the commanders and adjutants in the Department on February 1st, all the way down from Department Commander Bob Armstrong and Department Adjutant Hectic Hank Dudley down to the smallest posts for a big **MEMBERSHIP CONTEST** between the commanders on one side and the adjutants on the other for the entire month.
- Martin-Graves **BELLEVUE** Post is apt to lose its deserved popularity with youngsters in Sarpy County as the result of its decision to provide **CODLIVER** oil for children of unemployed.
- Shoes, stockings, and overshoes for needy **CHILDREN** were provided by **SPENCER** Post 78 because of card parties and dances, at which the sum of \$135 was raised. This amount of **MONEY** allowed the post to do some real **WELFARE** work.

March 1943 (91 years ago)

- Mason Colbert was the first Legionnaire of Nebraska City Post 8 to turn in a **SHOTGUN** in answer to the war department's call for such arms. A committee of Legion members had been appointed to supervise the collection of guns in the Nebraska City area. The war department is collecting good 12-gauge shotguns for **TRAINING** soldiers and sailors.
- With its issue of the March 4th Douglas County **LEGIONNAIRE**, official publication of Omaha Post 1, embarked on a progressive program of enlargement which will give subscribers at least an eight-page paper each week.
- An old-fashioned box **SOCIAL** held recently by the **LYMAN** post at State Line school house was well attended despite disagreeable weather. The sale of **BOXES** brought nearly sixty dollars towards the Post's project of sending the hometown newspaper to all men in service from the community.
- A half-dozen spray **PUMPS**, acquired by **VALENTINE** Post 90 from the proceeds of salvage material gathered and sold by the post, proved of great value in fighting a large prairie fire March 3 in the south part of Cherry County. A newspaper account of the fire states that the spray pumps were of immeasurable value in holding the blaze in check until backfires could be started.

VA Pension Debt Notification Letters to Beneficiaries

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently (November 2023) released information that the VA had established debts for certain veterans and survivors who have been receiving pensions.

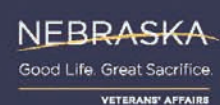
The debts were created as a result of discrepancies with data provided by those receiving pensions and data VA received from the Social Security Administration (SSA). The debts were a creation of the VA and SSA failing to develop a method to verify accuracy of self-reported social security income of veterans and survivors between 2011 and 2022. VA pension payments are based on income level, which is self-reported by the veteran or family member who received the payments and then verified by VA; however, the verification process did not occur for over a decade, which has resulted in overpayments to veterans and survivors who have been receiving pension payments between 2011 and 2022. VA resumed the income verification process in July 2022, which resulted in nearly 10,000 beneficiaries being identified as receiving overpayments, some overpayments spanning several years and amounting to fairly large debts. Many of these veterans and survivors are elderly, live on fixed incomes and are considered low-income (having little resources and a relatively low-income is a requirement of receiving VA pension), which means for the majority of these individuals identified as receiving overpayments have no or little means to repay the overpayments, resulting in significant financial hardships and unnecessary stress. VA has informed those identified as receiving overpayments, that they have paused the collection of all established pension debts. This does not mean the debt issue has been resolved, only that VA has decided to currently pause any collection of currently identified pension debt. If you are a veteran or survivor who is receiving pension payments from the VA and have not received information regarding the pause to collections of previously identified debt, please take the time to verify if VA created a debt on your account. I encourage all those receiving pension payments to check your VA account on VA.gov or by calling the Debt Management Center at 800-827-0648 (Monday-Friday, 7:30am to 7:00pm Eastern Time) to verify if you have a debt and if debt collections have been paused for debts created as a result of the VA/SSA verification of income failure. Staying informed is your best protection should the VA determine it is appropriate to begin collecting the debt. Should you have any concerns or questions about VA pension in general I encourage you to reach out to your county veteran service officer (CVSO). Veteran Service Officers are experienced in assisting veterans navigate VA benefits and can be an excellent source of information regarding federal, state and county veteran benefits.


If you are a wartime veteran or survivor of a wartime veteran in need of income to provide for your household, please contact your local CVSO to discuss if you may be eligible to receive VA pension benefits.




**BE A
BUDDY**

**CHECK IN ON YOUR
FELLOW VETERANS**





POW/MIA
Boyd Yochum
POW/MIA Liaison



William Marshall Roark was born 23 October 1943 at Sioux City, Iowa; and grew up in Omaha. He graduated from Omaha Central High School and was the cadet colonel and commanding officer of the school's Junior ROTC. He was appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1956, graduated and commissioned ensign on 8 June 1960. He attended naval flight school at Pensacola, Florida and Beeville, Texas.

Lieutenant Roark was a member of Attack Squadron 153. On the second deployment in 1965, flight crews of the Coral Sea saw the first heavy and sustained action of the Vietnam War during Operation Rolling Thunder.

On April 7, 1965, he piloted an A-4C Skyhawk, (148317, call sign Power House). LT Roark was leading a two-ship section armed reconnaissance mission in Dong Hoi, North Vietnam. His flight detected an anti aircraft artillery (AAA) site and engaged the target. Following the first attack, the site had not been destroyed. During his second attack, the Skyhawk was shot down and crashed off the coast of Dong Hoi. LT Roark ejected prior to the crash but was killed by enemy fire while parachuting to the sea. It was not possible to recover his body at the time of loss. Vietnamese government eventually repatriated human remains that U.S. analysts were able to identify as LT Roark.

On March 31, 1977, the Central identification Laboratory identified the remains of Lieutenant William Marshall Roark. Some reports state: "REMAINS NOT RETURNED AS REPORTED 03/18/77, CACCF CRASH/PILOT/BODY RECOVERED." Roark is listed as remains returned by the DoD 1996 list. Further information is classified, and not available.

LT William Marshall Roark was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and Distinguished Flying Cross. Remains are buried at Evergreen Memorial Park Cemetery in Omaha. LT Roark is memorialized on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. His name is also inscribed along with all his fallen comrades on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, DC.

In his last letter to his wife, LT Roark wrote, "I don't want my sons to fight a war I should have fought. I wish more Americans felt that way. I will not live in a totalitarian society." "I believe in God and will resist any force that attempts to remove God from society, no matter what the name."

The first ship to be named for someone lost in the Vietnam War was the U.S.S. Roark, FF-1053 (1969 – 1991). The Roark launched 24 April 1967; by the Todd Shipyards Corp, Seattle, Washington; sponsored by Mrs. William M. Roark and Mrs. Frank F Roark; and commissioned 22 November 1969, Commander Wayne L Beech in command. The Roark was a Knox class frigate. The Roark received three battle stars for Vietnam service. February 2001 the Roark was at the shipbreakers in the Port of Brownville, Texas, awaiting the cutting torches.



Chaplain's Thoughts
Father Alexander Borzych
Department Chaplain




A young child asked his mom, "What is a New Year's resolution?" The mother without batting an eye, responded by saying, "It is a to-do list for the first week of the new year."

I learned a long time ago that this mother's definition is one reason that I don't make resolutions. Usually, my attempt at a resolution lasts a little longer than a week, but not much longer!

Being a Christian, we are not called to simply make resolutions about our faith. Rather, through the waters of baptism we are tasked with living our faith daily. That call is the same whether we are baptized as an infant or seek out baptism as an adult.


But what does living our faith mean? We see Christ in his early ministry calling Simon and Andrew, who were casting their nets in the sea, and, as he walked farther, he saw Zebedee's sons, James, and John. Jesus said to them, "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men." What did Christ mean with that invitation? They were called to be examples of following the ways of Christ and inspiring others to do the same. What was started at that moment over two thousand years ago has been passed on from generation to generation, and it has come to you and me. Hopefully, we continue to pass on that tradition to the generations that will come after us.

What we are passing on is the mentality that we care for one another in the name of Christ. The aim is that we imitate Christ in our actions and our deeds. I don't know if we ever looked at it that way. The difference between a Christian performing an act and a humanitarian performing the same act is that a humanitarian helps people for the good of humanity. A Christian is performing the act in the name of Christ, as if Christ himself were performing the deed. Hopefully, when we commit ourselves to the Christian faith, we don't approach that commitment as a new year's resolution and abandon it in a week, a month, or several months. Rather, as Christians, the goal is that our faith becomes such a part of our identity that when we live, we live as Christ lives in us.



Department Flagpole Fundraiser

Department Headquarters is currently accepting donations toward a set of flagpoles for the new location. Please send donations to 150 NW 40th Street, Unit A, Lincoln NE 68528. Contact Adjutant Salak with any questions.



S.A.L. Notes
Eldon Kramer
Detachment Commander



Greetings from the Detachment of Nebraska Commander Eldon Kramer. Happy New Year to all The American Legion Family. Membership report as of December 31, 2023. Let's talk a little bit about membership. Nebraska squadrons are sitting at 4th in the Midwest Region, with a total of 4,944 members. I would like to reach out to The American Legion Family to help us reach out to those 2,048 delinquent members. Across the great state of Nebraska, we have 17 delinquent, zero squadrons, and we also have 8 squadrons with less than 10 members. Let us remember that our Constitution and Bylaws require 10 member squadrons. These are your delinquent squadrons: District 5, #41-0, #277-0; District 6, #6-0, #38-0, #59-0, #299-0, #107-0, #141-1, #236-0, #263-0; District 7, #47-0, #82-7, #158-0, #196-0; District 8, #30; District 10, #116-0, #118-1, #169-0, #248-1; District 11, #231-0, #255-1, #264-1; District 12, #56-1, #237-1, #369-5; District 13, #102-0. I'm reaching out to The American Legion Family. With their help, we may have a chance at the Triple Nickel Award, which has never been won by the Detachment of Nebraska. Recruit, retain, and reinstate members.

Let us remember the following events in the month of February, the observance of the birthdays of Presidents Washington and Lincoln. February is an appropriate time for a study of patriotism and discipline in the Ten Ideals and Five Star Programs. The American Legion's birthday is in March, making this an appropriate time to study the organization and its history, as well as the Preamble of the SAL Constitution. Let us remember that SAL squadrons can be a source of pride for their members and the sponsoring American Legion Post. By volunteering to assist veterans and participating in patriotic holiday events, squadrons not only expand the post's representation but reflect the SAL's purpose "to foster and perpetuate a true spirit of Americanism."

Please don't forget my Commander's project. Donations for Gifts for Yanks and planting trees at the West Nebraska Veterans Home. Keep marching forward, Be The One, and remember "Representing more than me."

Emblem and Brand Mark Use Request Form

The name, brand mark and emblems of The American Legion are registered service marks in the U.S. Trademark Office and protected by criminal and civil provisions of federal law (18 U.S.C. S 705 and 36 U.S.C. SS 21704 and 21705). Under authority of the National Executive Committee's May 2018 Resolution #1, the National Adjutant, or his designated representative (currently only the Director of American Legion Emblem Sales), may grant permission for a limited licensed use of the name and/or emblem(s) of The American Legion for use in accordance with the NEC's May 2018 Resolution #1 and U.S. Trademark Law.

To request limited licensed use of the name, brand mark and/or emblem(s) of The American Legion, please complete this form and forward it to your Department Headquarters Adjutant. Your Department Adjutant will forward the completed form to The American Legion – Emblem Sales Division. Please note that the member, or Post, requesting the name, brand mark and/or emblem(s) use must specifically define the intended use, identify the Post and quantity desired. The limited license, if granted, will only apply to the listed manufacturer.

Any name and/or emblem(s) or brand mark limited license granted is given on a one-time use for the specific quantity listed. Any additional quantity over this number will require a new request as the manufacturer is strictly prohibited from producing more items than that being authorized. This limited license requires that all items are specifically manufactured as requested and HQ may request a sample item.

Please note that if this limited license request is for merchandise available through American Legion Emblem Sales, the request will be denied. If the merchandise is not available through American Legion Emblem Sales, you may receive a limited license for the merchandise manufacture. Please note that if you are denied permission, you may still be able to purchase merchandise directly from an approved American Legion licensee or their retail outlets. To view a list of currently approved American Legion licensees, visit our website: <http://emblem.legion.org>.

Candidate Announcement

Boyd Yochum Department of Nebraska Commander



Yes, I was in Vietnam. We were winning when I left. I was raised on a small farm near Ashland but grew up in the Army. I graduated from Ashland High School, and while in the Army I attended the University of South Vietnam, Vinh Long Campus with a dual major in Counter Insurgency and Air Cavalry Operations. After my time in the Army, I received degrees from the Lincoln School of Commerce and Doane College.

I enlisted in the US Army in January 1967. After training I was assigned to what was at the time a bold new concept, a stand-alone Air Cavalry Squadron; the 7th Armored Squadron 1st Air Cavalry (Blackhawks). We were regimental, and not assigned to a division. As an early arrival, I was able to help organize, train and deploy our Blackhawk Squadron to Vietnam. We were the first unit in Vietnam to be issued to AH1C Cobra Assault Helicopters. After returning to the world, I was assigned to Department of the Army. Later I served in several assignments in the Nebraska National Guard, including five years as an Army Master Instructor where I taught Air Land Battle Doctrine, Army Leadership Doctrine, Counter Terrorism Foreign and Domestic, Land Navigation, and several other courses as needed.

I am married with three sons, a step-son, step-daughter, and eight grandchildren ranging in age from 24 to 4. I currently serve as Secretary of Living Hope Ministries in Lincoln. I was on the planning board, and currently on the Board of Directors for the Saunders County Veterans Memorial.

Offices held in the American Legion include: Post 129 Commander, Saunders County Commander, District 7 Adjutant working with four District Commanders, Area B Vice Commander, and presently Department Senior Vice Commander.

Gary Wooten Alternate National Executive Committeeman



Gary Wooten of Wilber Post 101 has announced his candidacy for election in June to the high office of Alternate National Executive Committeeman.

Gary joined The American Legion in 2005 as a Paid Up For Life member. He currently serves as Post First-Vice Commander, Post Honor Guard Commander, and as a member of the Department Executive Committee. Gary previously served as the only two-term NE Department Commander 2019-2021, Area C Vice-Commander, Department Assistant Sergeant-At-Arms, District 11 Commander and Vice-Commander, and Post Commander for 8 years.

He served over four years in the U. S. Air Force as a medic from 1969 through 1973. He has one child and four grandchildren, losing his daughter to covid in 2022. Gary currently volunteers with The American Legion, serves as Vice-Chair of the Saline County Tourism Commission, is a member of the Wilber Housing Authority Board, and is also involved in several other community organizations.

He has an Associate of Science degree in Forestry and a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Management, as well as minors in Natural Resources and Rangeland Management. He also completed post graduate work in Public Policy and Administration from New Mexico University.

Gary spent over 30 years working for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Park Service throughout the U.S. During his career, He worked in every state except AK, HI, and RI, including two tours in Washington, DC working on national policies, regulations, and technology development. During his career, Gary supervised staffs of up to 30 specialists and managed multi-million-dollar budgets.

He has received numerous awards during his career and after. Two Gary is most proud of include a Meritorious Award from the Secretary of Agriculture for outstanding technology service and a Certificate of Service from Senator Ben Sasse for helping select U.S. military academy senatorial nominations.

If you wish to discuss his candidacy with him, or want to help with his campaign, contact Gary at 402-821-7313 or at righttoarms@yahoo.com.

John-Henry Percy Alternate National Executive Committeeman



John-Henry Percy has announced his candidacy for the high office of Alternate National Executive Committeeman 2024 - 2026. He is eligible for membership in The American Legion through his service in the United States Air Force. His career spanned 29 years that included both enlisted and officer time. He is a 50-year member of The American Legion and is a Paid Up For Life Legion member at Papillion. He has proven leadership at the Post, County, District, and Department levels serving currently as your Department Commander.

He graduated from The American Legion College in 2009. In addition, he has completed the Extension Institute course (2006, 2012, and 2017) to include the new online Basic Training Course in 2019. He has attended 15 National Conventions and served on the Aerospace Committee for over 10 years.

He is a dual member with 60 plus years as a member of the Sons of The American Legion. He has held many leadership positions at the Squadron, District, and Detachment levels. He is fully retired and can dedicate the necessary time and energy to The American Legion and its four pillars.

He looks forward to seeing everyone at the Mid-Year Conference in Kearney and would truly appreciate all of his fellow Legionnaire's support to take on the role as Alternate National Executive Committeeman at the June convention. It would be both an honor and privilege to continue to serve my fellow Nebraska Legionnaires as your new Alternate National Executive Committeeman.

Membership Minute Steve Bartos - Membership Chairman

As this article is being written at the conclusion of the Mid-Year Conference, I'm glad to report that Nebraska exceeded the 80% of goal needed on the January 18th Mid-Winter Target Date. In fact, we exceeded the 85% mark (February 14th target date) when we gathered in Kearney for our Mid-Year Conference. The temps may be cold, but let's stay hot on membership.

You really need to read the rest of this article. There are a few things you need to know. MOST ALL OF YOU CAN SAVE SOME REAL MONEY!!

As I reported in the last issue, the national convention increased national dues by \$5.00 effective with the first dues notices that go out this summer for 2025 dues. And a resolution will be presented at our department convention in June proposing to increase our department dues by \$5.00, effective at the same time as the national increase. The national increase is a certainty; the department dues increase is very likely.

On December 4th, the national organization implemented what I call "Phase I" of a 3-year renewal option for members who were renewing online for 2024. The option is only available for those who renew online. Post adjutants and department headquarters staff are not involved in this new option.

When choosing this option, the renewals for 2024, 2025, and 2026 are all done at the 2024 dues rate. As a result, what is most likely going to be at least a \$10.00 dues increase per year can get pushed down the road for 2 years. You can most likely save at least \$20.00 (more if your local post increases its dues for 2025 and/or 2026).

For those of you who had already renewed by December 4th, there is also some good news for you. According to the latest information I just received from the Internal Affairs Division while I was at the Mid-Year Conference, "Phase 2" of the new option went live on January 22nd. When it did, those of you who have already paid your 2024 dues are now able to renew online for an additional 3 years at the 2024 rate --- thus receiving the same benefit made available to those 2023 members who renewed initially for 3 years online.

Renewing online is quick and easy. Go to www.Legion.org and click on the "RENEW" button. Just enter your name and ID number, and a variety of options will be presented to you --- including a quote for a PUFL membership. (If your birthday isn't in the database, you will be prompted to provide it. While a PUFL membership is admittedly expensive and perhaps not for everyone, this may be a good time --- before dues go up --- to consider that option, too.)

For those of you who aren't connected online, there is a work-around. Pay your dues to someone who has a computer and give them your American Legion ID number. They can then access the site, enter YOUR name and ID number, and pay for you with their credit card.

Have a nice February.

2024 Mid - Year Conference - Kearney



Raymond Vail, National Vice Commander (Midwest Region), was presented with a plaque from Department and an Admiralty from the Nebraska Navy. Pictured (L to R) NECman Fred Craigie, NVC Raymond Vail, and Commander Percy.



National and Department Officers are seated at the head table during the Joint Session. Pictured (L to R), NECman Fred Craigie, National Vice Commander Raymond Vail, Department Commander Percy, Department President Lisa Moore, Detachment Commander Eldon Kramer.



Jennifer Laux presented PDC Don Suchy with the yearbook, minutes, and Nebraska Legionnaire newspapers for his year as Commander. Commander Percy presented Department Historian Jennifer Laux with her yearbook and the plaque from her first-place finish in the yearbook competition.



2023-24 Boys' State Governor Anish Amin of Omaha spoke to the joint session. Pictured (L to R) Commander Percy, Johy Amin, Anish Amin, Ishan Amin and Americanism Chairman Michael Hatfield.



Alexander Kosse of Omaha was awarded the 2023 Nebraska American Legion Baseball Player of the Year plaque. Pictured (L to R) Assistant Adjutant Eric Martin, Alexnader Kosse, and Commander Percy.



Sharon Tolliver was presented the 2023 Teacher of the Year Award. Pictured (L to R) Commander Percy, Sharon Tolliver of Cody-Kilgore Middle School, Mike Tolliver and Americanism Chairman Michael Hatfield.



Joshua Mammen of Creighton Prep High School was the winner of the annual Nebraska American Legion Oratorical competition and was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. Second place and a \$600 scholarship went to Ella Brenneman of Valentine, third place and a \$400 scholarship went to Esten Johnsen of Seward, and fourth place and a \$200 scholarship went to Reagan Choat of Plainview. Pictured with the winners are Commander Percy, Oratorical Chairman Michael Landkammer, and Americanism Chairman Michael Hatfield.

Nebraska American Legion 2023-2024 Lottery Winners

Thank you to all that participated in this year's lottery. The drawing was held during the Sunday Joint Session of the Mid-Year Conference in Kearney. The winners were:

- Grand Prize: \$2,500, Ronald Jensen, North Platte
- 2nd Place: \$1,000, Robert Egge, Kearney
- 3rd Place: \$ 500, Elaine Salyer, Exeter
- 4th Place: \$ 200, Gary Wooten, Wilbur
- 5th Place: \$ 200, Chauncey Linn, Theadford
- 6th Place: \$ 200, William Lux, Fremont
- 7th Place: \$ 200, Richard Hoarty, Grafton
- 8th Place: \$ 200, James Hall, McCook

A special drawing was also held for tickets purchased at the Conference. Each of the following won \$100: Dan Benes, Valparaiso; Gary Wooten, Wilbur; Doug Frahm, Amelia; Lori Reimers, Central City; Tina Nelson, Clay Center.

Purpose of The Member Data Form

The American Legion Member Data Form (MDF) is a multipurpose form for tracking and providing accurate information on Post members. You can download the form online on our website. With the exception of transferring members from one post to another, most MDF changes can be made through MyLegion.org.

Note: Members can be transferred online through MyLegion.org if the member is paying their dues at the time of transfer.

The MDF can be used to report deceased members, continuous years, name corrections, address changes, branch of service, war era, and others.

On the MDF, always include the nine-digit member ID number, Post number, and Department name. The signature of the authorized Post officer is required at the bottom of the form. Be sure to mail part 1-3 to Department Headquarters and keep part 4 for your Post files.

Membership transfer from one post to another is handled by completing the MDF. Always ask prospective members if they currently are or have been a member. If the veteran has a current or previous nine-digit ID number, it should be reported on the transfer. If a member signs up as a new member, a duplicate record can be created, and multiple renewal notices will be received by the member.

Department Convention Program

It's time to start putting together our Department Convention Program and the Department is selling space in the program for individuals or businesses to advertise. Please ask around your community to garner support. All ads and payments must be received before June 7, 2024. The program is 8.5 x 5.5 in size. Please contact Carol at Headquarters.

- \$10 - page split into eight sections
- \$20 - page split into four sections
- \$30 - page split into two sections
- \$60 - Full page



Arlington Post 71 presented Quilts of Valor and the District 8 Citizenship of the Year Award. Pictured top (L to R) Commander Steve Bremer, Robert Weiss, Ronnie Hilgenkamp, Kenneth Steffensmeier, Delvin Scheer, and Robert Fuchs. Pictured bottom (L to R) Commander Steve Bremer, District 8 Citizenship of the Year Award recipient Gary Denison, Larry Rinas, Leroy Laaker, Roger Chisholm, and Joe Buschelman.



Aden, Roger, Farnam, Korea
 Albright, Jim, Papillion, SAL
 Alderman, Lloyd J., Newport, WWII
 Allen, Gale C., Oxford, Korea
 Anderson, Curtis W., Millard, Vietnam
 Archuletta, Johnnie O., North Platte, WWII
 August, William, Dorchester, Vietnam
 Baasch, William, Grand Island, Korea
 Baker, Glen E., Ainsworth, WWII
 Barber, James H., Fairbury, Korea
 Bartling, Harvey A., Hooper, Korea
 Bauer, Donald A., Omaha, Korea
 Bechtel, Guy, Ogallala, WWII
 Beebe, Charles E., Scotia, WWII
 Behrends, Marvin H., Johnson, WWII
 Binkley, Stanley C., Emerson, WWII
 Bjerke, Gordon H., Lincoln, WWII
 Blazek, Don R., Valparaiso, Vietnam
 Blecha, Richard, Seward, Korea
 Bohaty, Richard D., Dwight, Korea
 Bolden, Ronald, Fremont, Vietnam
 Bolich, Alan, Loup City, Lebanon/Grenada
 Bounds, Rhitta A., Lebanon/Grenada
 Boyle, Edward J., O'Neill, Korea
 Brandt, Donald, Ruskin, WWII
 Brown, Alan G., Wood River, Vietnam
 Bruner, Doug, Hooper, Vietnam
 Bruns, Rick, Weeping Water
 Buchholz, Gordon G., Columbus, WWII
 Buckwater, James R., Lincoln, Vietnam
 Burbach, Reinhold H., North Platte, WWII
 Burda, Richard G., Albion, Vietnam
 Burkhalter, James R., Lincoln, Vietnam
 Burri, Donald G., Benson, WWII
 Burton, Robert M., Lincoln
 Cast, Kenneth P., Beaver Crossing
 Chaney, Patrick L., Nebraska City, Vietnam
 Ciekko, Richard J., Millard, Vietnam
 Colberg, Douglas D., Seward, Vietnam
 Connelly, Dennis W., Omaha, Vietnam
 Conner, L.V., Arnold, WWII
 Cranfill, Joyce C., Aurora, Korea
 Creasman, Roger, Elsie, Vietnam
 Cripe, John E., Lincoln, Vietnam
 Cronin III, William J., Clay Center, Vietnam
 Damrow, Franklin F., Diller, WWII
 Dean, James E., Doniphan
 Decora, Kenneth A., Winnebago, Korea
 Decora, Richard T., Winnebago, Vietnam
 Degroff, Donald, Atkinson, Korea
 Dillman, Johnny, Morrill
 Donahue, Thomas C., Valparaiso, Vietnam
 Douglass, Larry D., Brewster, Vietnam
 Duer, Edwin B., Utica, Korea
 Durham, Terry L., Lincoln, Vietnam
 Dwinell, Lonnie J., Chambers, Vietnam
 Eloge, Keith W., Hickman, Vietnam
 Engel, Randall C., Doniphan
 Fink, Harvey L., Dannebrog, Korea
 Florell, Robert, Lincoln, WWII
 Foote, Leland G., Lincoln, Vietnam
 Fox, Richard B., Brewster, Korea
 Franey, Melburn, Crawford, Korea
 Furby, Daryle L., Fullerton, Vietnam
 Galaway, Joseph R., Fairmont, WWII
 Ganseboom, Marlin, Osmond, WWII
 Gerdes, Eugene, Millard, Vietnam

Gill, Timothy P., Friend, Vietnam
 Goodson, Lloyd E., Alexandria, Vietnam
 Grabbert, Robert, Omaha, Korea
 Graham, Robert G., York, SAL
 Graves, Steven L. Sr., Sargent, Vietnam
 Gubbels, Gaylard, Norfolk, Vietnam
 Haeker, Allen, Alma
 Hansen, Gordon C., Allen, Korea
 Hanson, Max A., Elsie, WWII
 Hardin, Harry D., Alma, Korea
 Hardy, Bob R., Wauneta, Korea
 Hargreaves, James J., Sidney, Vietnam
 Hartley, Frank J., Hebron, WWII
 Hass, Lavern H., West Point, WWII
 Havens, John, McCook, Vietnam
 Hayward, Bill M., Gothenburg, WWII
 Hermance, C.C., Loup City, Korea
 High, David, Bertrand, Korea
 Hilton, Larry R., Omaha, Vietnam
 Hinrichs, Richard, Glenvil, Vietnam
 Hoins, Richard L., Hebron
 Holmberg, Donald R., Stromsburg, WWII
 Holt, Daryl W., Scotia
 Houghton, Louis C., Winnebago, Vietnam
 Hyde, David A., York, Vietnam
 Jackson, Michael J., Omaha, Korea
 Janeczek, Wilfred, Colon
 Jeardeo, Leonard R., Hebron, Vietnam
 Johansen, Gerald, Osceola, Korea
 Johns, Darrel R., Syracuse, Korea
 Johnson, Gene H., Gretna, Vietnam
 Johnson, Lawrence T., Cody, Vietnam
 Johnson, Richard, Wauneta, WWII
 Jones, Frank E., Niobrara, Korea
 Jones, Vernon L., Gretna, Vietnam
 Jurgens, Thomas W., Beatrice, SAL
 Kacere, Michael T., Gordon, WWII
 Kalvoda, Kenneth J., Clay Center, Korea
 Kearns, Steven E., Winnebago, Vietnam
 Kirkland Sr, Jack E., Lincoln, Korea
 Klimek, Lawrence J., Grand Island, Vietnam
 Kloch, Robert L., Lincoln, Vietnam
 Kreifels, Brad, Havelock Panama
 Krzycki, Adrian, North Platte, WWII
 Kubik, Loren, Pender, Vietnam
 Kuta, Louis J., Columbus, Korea
 Larsen, Marvin C., Auburn, WWII
 Larson, Don, Dakota City, WWII
 Latter, Ronny M., Wilcox, Vietnam
 Lehn, Stanley E., Lincoln, Vietnam
 Lessig, John J., Grand Island, Korea
 Licking, Charles N., Lexington, Vietnam
 Lindgren, Roger L., Malmo, Korea
 Liss, Edward P., Fullerton, Korea
 Loecker, Merle, Wynot, Korea
 Lovejoy, Kenneth, Cowles, WWII
 Lux, Gerald, Crawford, WWII
 MacLauchlan, Robert S., Lincoln, WWII
 Maly, Donald F., Valparaiso, Vietnam
 Mares, Mildred L., Columbus, WWII
 Mathhouser, Richard D., Omaha, Gulf War
 Matteo, Albert P., Norfolk, Korea
 McCauley, Edwin C., Walthill, Vietnam
 McCowen, Marvin L., Elsie
 McIntire, E.C., O'Neill, Vietnam
 McLellan, Alvin, Beatrice, Vietnam
 McMullen, Andrew, Auburn, WWII
 Meinke, Marvin W., Hallam, Korea
 Meyer, Harvey L. Jr., St. Paul, Vietnam
 Meyer, James T., Orchard, WWII
 Miller, Fred C., David City, WWII
 Miller, Richard G., Lincoln, WWII
 Morgan, John D., Valparaiso,

Vietnam
 Morlock, Elroy, Sidney, Vietnam
 Nelson, Harry A., Maxwell, WWII
 Novak, James C., Western, Korea
 Nuss, Jonathon A., Gering, WWII
 Olderog, Robert H., Millard, WWII
 Oltman, Duane H., Cortland, Vietnam
 Otto, Ledrew G., Beatrice, Vietnam
 Pace, Jim D., Millard, Vietnam
 Pearce, Gary L., Grand Island, Vietnam
 Peery, Ronald D., Denton
 Person, Herman R., Columbus, Korea
 Peterson, Bernhard R., Millard, WWII
 Peterson, Richard D., Ord, WWII
 Peterson, Robert D., Ord, Korea
 Pientka, Lawrence, Lincoln, Korea
 Pinkerton, Donald L., Chadron, WWII
 Pohlman, Walter A Sr., Lincoln, Korea
 Powell, Carroll A., Barneston, Korea
 Raiter, John L., Valparaiso, Vietnam
 Rastede, Allan H., Allen, Vietnam
 Reppert, Charles L., Pender, Korea
 Reynolds, Myron, Merna, Vietnam
 Ripple, Buck, North Platte, WWII
 Rocolle, Dennis D., Geneva
 Ruff, Ronald W., Lincoln, Vietnam
 Saddler, Grant E., Aurora, Vietnam
 Schippert, James E., Alma, Korea
 Schroeder, Ralph C., Alma, WWII
 Schultz, James W., Beatrice, Vietnam
 Schultz, Wilbert E., Wood River, Korea
 Schwer, Harold, Papillion, WWII
 Sheets, Leroy A., Herman, Korea
 Sladky, Joseph L., Papillion, Korea
 Smith Jr, Lawrence L., Louisville, Vietnam
 Smith, Kenneth, Waneta, Vietnam
 Snyder, Gerald C., Pawnee City, WWII
 Spike, Dean W., Silver Creek, Korea
 Spoon, Jerry L., Arlington, Vietnam
 Stalp, Francis, West Point, Korea
 Stauffer, Richard R., Lincoln, WWII
 Steider, Bobby R., Beaver Crossing
 Sterup, Victor E., Osceola, Vietnam
 Stiefel, Harlan R., Pleasant Dale, Vietnam
 Stigge, Patrick D., Omaha, Vietnam
 Stoltz, Ross, Naponee, Vietnam
 Suhr, Dennis, Elgin, Vietnam
 Svendesen, Walter C., Omaha, Vietnam
 Swanson, James E. Sr., Homer, Vietnam
 Swanson, Ronald, St. Paul, Vietnam
 Switzer, Wayne, Palmer, Vietnam
 Thomas, Ronald W., Beatrice, Vietnam
 Tietgen, Barry H., Pierce, Vietnam
 Tracy, Tom S., Valparaiso, Korea
 Tucker, John G., Beatrice
 Turner, Ralph N., Brewster, WWII
 Tyser, Gene L., DeWitt, SAL
 Udron, Frank, Omaha, Korea
 Vasa, Timothy E., Weston, SAL
 Volk, Robert, Arlington, Vietnam
 Votruba, Julius, G., Hemingford, Korea
 Wagner, Donald L., Ord
 Westerberg, Doug, Valparaiso, Vietnam
 Whitehead, Charles A., Geneva, Vietnam
 Widger, Marlin E., Wauneta, WWII
 Williams, Warren, Bruning, WWII
 Wolf, Dudley, Ansley
 Woodruff, Gayle W., Stamford, WWII
 Yantz, Robert W., Daykin, Korea
 Zelasney, Bernard J., Columbus, WWII
 Zimmerman, Elton F., Ord

Events Calendar

February

- 10 District 8 and District 10 Convention
- 13 District 15 Convention
- 14 Valentines Day
- 17 District 13 Convention
- 19 Presidents Day - Office Closed
- 25 - 28 Washington Conference

March

- 3 District 6 Convention
- 9 District 3, District 5, and District 12 Convention
- 15 American Legion Birthday
- 16 District 7 and District 9 Convention
- 17 District 2 Convention
- 23 District 1 and District 11 Convention
- 29 Good Friday - Office Closed
- 31 Easter

April

- 6 District 4 Convention

May

- 5 - 9 Spring Meetings
- 17 - 19 Oratorical Contest
- 27 Memorial Day - Office Closed

Check www.nebraskalegion.net under the meetings tab for upcoming National, State, and District events.

Mail Call

Dear Nebraska American Legion members,

Thank you so much for all of the beautiful holiday cards you sent to the Department. We really appreciate the thoughtfulness and are looking forward to an inspiring and productive new year. There will be a contest this year, and we are asking members to send in a photo of their local veterans memorial for the Mid-Year and Convention front page of the program. Contact Carol at Headquarters for more information.

Department Staff

Sons of The American Legion Membership As of January 15, 2024

District	2023 Members	2024 Members
1	314	189
2	610	460
3	215	208
4	367	226
5	149	104
6	1,350	1,012
7	695	469
8	847	597
9	314	252
10	354	251
11	1,111	996
12	236	214
13	129	113
15	143	130
Total	6,834	5,221




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Papillion Post 32 officers for 2023 – 2024 were sworn in by Commander John-Henry Percy.



Hallam Post 294 presented Quilts of Valor. Pictured (L to R) Steven Chelton, Randal Eickmeier, William Kerns, Robert Rahorst and Richard Schnieder.



Venango Post 270 presented certificates of 50 years of continuous membership. Pictured (L to R) Bruce Neese, Dick Neese, Roy Neese, and Commander Dave Deden.



Sidney Post 17 participated in the Avenue of Flags at the Veterans Park.



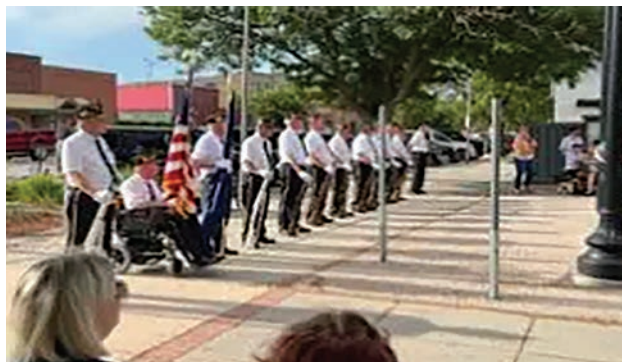
Ron Corbett, Lyle Bartels, and Gary Wooten are Past Department Commanders from Saline county. They participated in a flag raising ceremony held at the Saline County Historical Society's annual Pioneer Day celebration.



Wayne Post 43 presented a certificate for 55-years of continuous membership to James Wiebelhaus. Pictured (L to R) James Wiebelhaus and Commander Dennis Lutt.



Cairo Post 333 presented a certificate for 50-years of continuous membership to Dennis Harb. Pictured (L to R) Commander Wade Osburn and Dennis Harb.



Dawes County Veterans Honor Guard received a \$10,000 grant from the "100 Women Who Care About Chadron" Facebook group.



Dodge Post 122 participated in the Wreaths Across America program in December 2023.



Butte Post 51 celebrated the dedication of their new Legion Hall.



Millard Post 374 participated in the annual Millard Days parade. Pictured (L to R) Randy Young, John Polson, Eric Brink, Senator Pete Ricketts, Jim Persson, and Robert Kuhl.



Valley Post 58 presented certificates of continuous membership to its members. Pictured (L to R) Joseph E. Ballweg, 40 years; Roger Fallon, 40 years; Thomas J. Merryweather, 5 years; Joe T. Timm, 45 years; and Troy A. Bevington, 15 years.



Grand Island Squadron 53 presented certificates of continuous membership to its members. Pictured (L to R) Bill Grossart, Mark Peters, David Reeder, Doug Kucera, Richard Sok, Duane Leitschuck, Glenn Palensky and Dale Fillinger.



Brainard Squadron 273 was presented their charter by Senior Vice Tim Hecke. Pictured (L to R) Larry Ratkovec, Don Raskey, Commander Adam Miller, Cory Kudlacek, and Kevin Behne.



Lincoln Post 3 marched in the 2023 Veterans parade.



DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT - LISA MOORE



As I write this article, we haven't had the Mid-Year Information Conference yet, but I know it will be -- and now was --- amazing, through my eyes. So much has gone on in the last six months, I can't believe that I am almost halfway through my term.

I took a trip to Alaska for National President Lisa's homecoming and a trip to Kansas for the Eisenhower Pilgrimage. I attended the Districts 12, 13, and 8 Fall Meetings. I was in Kearney for an informational tour and for a Veteran's Day parade. And, of course, I participated in the District 1 Membership Tour.

Members, this has been the greatest of dreams; and, with Mid-Year just completed by the time you read this, I am so happy that I got to live this dream with all of you.

If the last year has taught me nothing (remember I have attended four funerals), you only get to do what you want NOW. If you don't take the chance, you blew it. There is no second chance at what life has to offer.

Dream big. Why not? The only thing stopping you is that nasty little voice in your head. Ask for help. There are a lot of us out here who are willing and able. Dream the big dream; and, even if it isn't exactly how you wanted it, you tried.

I am reminded of a time when I was Membership Chair, and I received an email from Millard asking for volunteers to help serve at a tailgate party. I thought, "why not?" My daughter and I went, helped and had a blast doing it. I also took away a great story.

I have a Department fundraiser going on. I said dreams because, as we know, when I dream something my amazing husband makes it come true. He did so again. I have five metal art pieces that he created with the ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE, MARINES, and NATIONAL GUARD (with the minuteman), and The American Legion emblem. You get to pick the one for which you buy your ticket. Tickets will be \$5 each. If you want one, you can obtain it from me or the Department Headquarters Office. For more details, just call, text, or email me.

We have a lot more to do over the next six months. Scholarships, Americanism Essays, Poppy Posters, Girls State, and Department Convention. In between, I will squeeze in a trip to Springfield, Illinois for the Lincoln

Pilgrimage, District Conventions, and the Truman Pilgrimage. To end my term, National President Lisa will visit Nebraska on August 3rd, 4th, and 5th. We will spend Saturday and Sunday in Wilber at the Czech Fest, and then Kearney and District 6 will host a "Meet and Greet" on Sunday evening (more info to follow). On Monday, we will present the Fisher House with the gift cards that my President's Project will supply.

So, with all of this being said -- while I am thinking about it -- thank you for allowing me this journey as your President. I am this year and always your biggest cheerleader. Thanks for being with me on this journey. I've said it before, and I will say it again...

NOBODY DOES IT BETTER THAN THE NEBRASKA AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY.

We are Nebraska Strong and Faithful -- Serving Veterans Always!!!

Lisa Moore
Department President



MID-YEAR INFORMATIONAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Sixty Auxiliary members braved the winter weather and snow whiteouts to attend the conference. Reports, activities and conversation kept everyone warm during the cold weekend.



These metal emblems are raffle items for President Lisa's project. Tickets are \$5. The drawing will take place at Department Convention in June.



Pictured are Department President Lisa Moore and Honorary Nebraska Dept. Junior President Samantha Stepanek. Samantha addressed the Auxiliary, and it was announced that a collection of \$300 was received for her project of gardening seeds and tools for the veterans in the homes.

VICE PRESIDENT

I hope you all are having a great start to your 2024!

Thank you all for your work with membership this year. Chair Loree is pushing hard to help us gain more wonderful members and reach 100% of our goal. Those members who sign up ten new members this year will

receive a special gift from National Chair Karen Toll. I know we can all work together to help President Lisa reach 100% in Nebraska by Department Convention.

I look forward to seeing many of you at District Conventions over the next few months. Please reach out to

me if you would like me to attend or if there is anything you need.

Thank you for all of your support and continuing to support the ALA mission.

Amanda Washburn
Department Vice President



Pictured is President Lisa cheering on the chairmen giving their reports at the Mid-Year Informational Conference.



FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

Happy 2024 and greetings from Department Headquarters!

There are deadlines ahead for Membership, Leadership, Americanism Essays, Girls State, and Scholarships. Units need to pay attention to what's in your newsletters and "The Star." We are beginning a new calendar year, so we are halfway through this Auxiliary year.

Membership is so important to the survival of our organization. We need the Unit Data Forms sent in the January Newsletter to Department Headquarters by March 1.

Returning this form ensures that your unit members will receive the correct dues amounts on their national dues notices. You must also have the correct 'remit to' person information on this form so individual dues are sent to the correct address. There must also be a Unit Junior Dues amount on this form. Even if you don't currently have any, it needs to be on there.

PLEASE!! You'll see the

Department's number pop up on your caller ID if the form isn't returned. As always, address changes should be turned in as soon as they are known.

In the March newsletter, the Unit Leadership form will be enclosed. **DO NOT RETURN THIS FORM IMMEDIATELY.** This is to be completed and returned AFTER you have had election of officers in May or June. **WE WANT THE NEW LEADERSHIP NAMES FOR 2024-2025.** The most appreciated Unit Chairman contacts are Girls State, Poppy, and Membership. Even though Membership is submitted earlier, unforeseen things happen. It'll be the Caller ID thing again if it's not there.

Americanism Essays are due March 15 to Chairman Tina Nelson, and your unit should already be working with the schools on this. Scholarship applications need to be complete and meet the March 15 deadline to Department. The same goes for the March 1 Girls State application

deadline. The fee remains at \$400 for this year, but the activity fee has been increased to \$25. If your unit is willing to pay this fee for the applicant, please make it a separate check. If you have questions, please call or email headquarters.

Office hours are now 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. I am the only one in the office during this time, and I have been graciously allowed to eat lunch and have bathroom breaks. If there is no answer, please leave a message with your name and phone number. No phone number; no return call. Voice recognition is not a feature on our phone plan.

Thanks so much for your kind words of support as I wade my way through this new position with the Auxiliary. I look forward to serving our Nebraska membership for the rest of this year and beyond.

Roxanne Hiatt
Department Secretary

CHILI COOK-OFF A SUCCESS!

A District Chili Cook-off was held at the 2024 Mid-Year Conference in Kearney. The event was held at the Kearney Legion Post, and nine chilis were entered. Judging was completed by those wishing to "taste test" the spicy and regular varieties. In addition, individuals could purchase just a bowl of chili and cinnamon rolls.

The districts participating were 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13 as well as Auxiliary headquarters' staff. For \$20, individuals were able to taste the nine entries and then place their tickets in the corresponding red solo cup for their top choice(s). The district providing each chili was kept anonymous.

The two top winners were District 8 for the regular chili and District 9 for the spicy variety. What did they win? A gold ladle and bragging rights!!

Thank you to those individuals who made the chili for their district, to the Department officers and staff who made the cinnamon rolls, to the volunteers who helped serve the chili and cinnamon rolls, and to the eighty-seven individuals who did the "taste testing!"

The evening netted \$935 for the Auxiliary General Fund! If you did not have a chance to taste the chili, you can still donate to the General Fund. Send your donation to Headquarters.



Pictured: District Family Chili Cook-off winners: (l to r) Spicy: District 9 - Maria Atterberry. Regular: District 8 - Lindsay Brown and PDP Vicki Ozenbaugh

IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING TRACK OF HISTORY

This is a reminder that with Spring Conventions coming up, it is time for your Unit Historian to finish working on your History Book.

The rules were sent out in the ABC Book. If you have any questions, please give me a call or send me an

email. I am anxious to see you at the Mid-Year Conference. Also, please let me know if you want me to attend your district convention.

It is vital that each member sees the importance of documenting the history of our organization

and making sure our prospective generations know the position and influence we have.

Ruth Hietbrink
Department Historian



The 2023 Fall VA "Stand Down" for Veterans was held in November. Approximately 125 men and women were assisted with well-being services at the event. At our American Legion Family table, your VA department special gifts provided \$143.96 worth of toe/hand warmers. Additional cash gifts (\$200) from The American Legion and Sons of the American Legion and non-cash donations from units supported over \$485 of supplies. Pictured: (l-r) are Jennifer Suttue of Unit 362, D8 Chaplain Becky Saathoff, and D8 Vice President Melissa Steidle.



The VA Omaha Medical Center "Veterans Dollar Days" in November 2023 helped 74 inpatients. Gifts for Yanks made 82 vets feel special, and the Gift Shop provided a choice of a small gift with cash or \$20 cash in a holiday card to 69 veterans. Pictured are recently hired CDCE Chief Michael Ingram and ALA VA Representative Paula Pillen distributing a card to an inpatient. (Photo courtesy VA Public Affairs)

Remember to send your assignments a couple weeks before the month they are due.

2024 CENTERPIECE AND TRAY FAVOR ASSIGNMENTS

Month	Grand Island VA Med Center 10 Centerpiece	Central NE Veterans Home 215 Tray Fav	Bellevue Eastern NE VA Home 24 Centerpiece	Norfolk VA Home 20 Centerpiece	Western NE VA Home 13 Centerpiece	Western NE VA Home 90 Tray Fav	Omaha VA Med Center 75 Tray Fav
Feb.	#251 Arcadia	District 6 Juniors	#353 Louisville	#80 Humphrey	#301 Dalton		#354 Pleasant Dale
Mar.	#126 Broken Bow	#285 North Loup		#70 West Point	#213 Wallace	#213 Wallace	#374 Millard
Apr.	#225 Eddyville	#288 Farnam		#62 Newcastle			#264 Dorchester
May		#52 Kearney	#264 Dorchester	#240 Milligan			
June				#127 Craig			
July	#310 Gibbon	#288 Farnam	#154 Blair	#283 Platte Center	#7 Alliance	#133 Culbertson	
Aug.		#52 Kearney		#176 Blue Hill			
Sept.							
Oct.		#141 Hampton		#307 S Sioux City	#10 Morrill		
Nov.	#335 Davenport						
Dec.	#141 Hampton	#209 Franklin		#357 Brunswick	#7 Alliance	#7 Alliance	
Jan.							

Please read the ABC book under "Service to Veterans." Some facilities have restrictions as to what you can use for decorations. If you have any questions, please contact the facilities contact person.

Service to Veterans Chair: Mary Krause, 339 N Osborne Street, Ainsworth, NE 68210

EDITOR'S NOTE

Please send articles and pictures for future editions of "THE STAR" to Lorene Bartos, Editor at 7441 San Mateo Lane, Lincoln, NE 68516 or email to: ALATheStarNE@yahoo.com. Send photos as jpg attachments. Material for the next issue needs to be submitted by **MAR 10, 2024.**

UNIT 126 CARE PACKAGE

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 126 sent a care package to an Air Force unit deployed overseas. Douglas Doggett, son of Casey and Jan Doggett, is a member of that military unit.

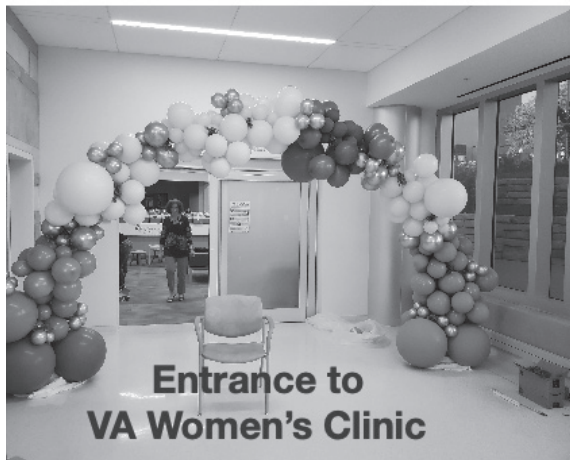
Our Auxiliary sent personal,

general, and recreational items to the unit; and Doug's mom made cookies. There are 300 in the unit, and Doug is pictured along with 4 co-workers.

We would like to thank all for their service.



15 VETERAN FAMILIES ASSISTED THE VA OMAHA BABY SHOWER AT THE WOMEN'S CLINIC



The Veterans Affairs (VA) Baby Shower at the Omaha Medical Center was held in the Fall of 2023. Your ALA Department of Nebraska "special gifts" supported \$305.31 for baby supplies and an additional \$183.16 was provided by units for formula and other supplies.



The Syracuse ALA Unit 100 Community Service Committee made 20 Christmas Fruit Plates that were delivered to Veterans and Auxiliary members who are homebound or living in the nursing home or assisted living facility. Great comments of appreciation were received from many of those who received the plates. Pictured (l to r) are Lois Johnson, Kathy Bruns, Laura Haynes, Mollie Keene, Bev Wilhelm, Linda Halvorsen, Virginia Reed, and Jill Holle. Not pictured is Unit President Jenice Bates.

2024-2025 OFFICER CANDIDATES ANNOUNCED

The following members announced their candidacies for various offices at the Mid-Year Conference. Anyone desiring to run for office may announce their candidacy at Department Convention in June.

- NEC – Vicki Ozenbaugh
- President – Amanda Washburn
- Vice President- Ruth Hietbrink
- Historian – Vicki Cyboron
- Chaplain – Lori Reimers

VETERAN ART CONTEST

Calling All Artists!

Submit your Artwork

We want to showcase Veteran Artwork in the halls of our newest Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Sarpy County. Anticipated to open in late 2024.

Contest Submission Requirements:

- 24" x 36" Frameable Art
- Theme of artwork: nature, calm, & relaxing
- Complements interior design colors of the clinic (soft greens, blues, oranges, greys)
- Willing to donate artwork to VA

Submit to Volunteer Services in:

- Omaha (Heather Shelley)
- Lincoln (Ty Andrews)
- Grand Island (Jody Johnson)

Deadline to submit:
April 30, 2024

For more information about this unique opportunity contact Kim Gorman at kimberly.gorman@va.gov

ALEXANDRIA AMERICAN LEGION HALL HOSTS EVENTS

On November 19, 2023, the Alexandria Legion Hall was used to host a Thanksgiving Dinner, and the dinner had a nice response.

The owners of Bear-N-T's restaurant in Alexandria worked to gather community members to donate food, people to cook, and people to work. It was definitely a success. This was a donation dinner – no specific charge was asked for.

More than \$800 was collected that evening with more coming in later. All of these funds were donated to Alexandria American Legion Post #194 to help in keeping the Legion Hall up and running. There are a few rentals in the future, but we can always use more. Contact Alexandria Unit #194 President Cindy Lujan (402.310.8951) for information.



DEPARTMENT JUNIOR CONVENTION

Come one! Come all!
Save Saturday, March 23, at 10:00 a.m. on your calendars to attend the Department Junior Convention in St. Paul. Department Honorary Junior President Samantha Stepanek will guide us through our day.
Remember to bring with you to

junior convention any items for the Craft Display, Poppy Centerpiece, or Poppy Craft contests.
Hope to see you there!

Crys Bauermeister
Junior Activities Chair



Syracuse Middle School Principal Tim Farley accepts school supplies from Therese Juilfs, Education/Americanism Chairman of Syracuse American Legion Auxiliary Unit 100. The items were donated by members of the Auxiliary to participate in the National ALA "Give 10 to Education" program and in recognition of American Education Week, November 13-17. Boxes of school supplies were delivered to Syracuse Middle School and Elementary School and the Villa Marie School for Exceptional Children at Waverly.

MEMBERSHIP

Recently I was asked the question, "When members do not pay their dues, how many times should we reach out to them to see if they will renew their dues?" This unit president followed that question up by stating that their unit has tried e-mailing notices, sending letters, and making phone calls to encourage these members to pay their dues. She ended with, "We want to be assertive, of course, to get our memberships renewed, but do not want to 'harass' any member in any way."

My gut reaction was to answer her question with an abrupt "as many times as it takes." But, then I remembered that some of us live in small towns where these member(s) are our friends and neighbors, making continual "asks" difficult. Some of us live in larger areas where we may not be as well acquainted with the member(s) in question, so repeated contacts could become awkward. Some of us are extroverts who may have been labeled as pushy due to repeated requests for payment; and some of us are introverts who do not enjoy approaching the same folks over and over again to obtain their dues renewals.

At that point, I thought, "Let's

get creative. What have I heard from others about innovative ways to approach those who have yet to send in their membership renewals?" Here are some ideas I've heard in the past:

- One unit had a member who was going through some unexpected health issues and the resulting medical costs thereof. Money was a serious issue for this member at the time. But the member was very creative, so the unit voted to pay her dues renewal if she would be willing to make the tray favors for the unit that year. She was beyond grateful to be asked.

- One unit had a couple of members who had moved to nursing homes and were not able to pay their own dues. That unit voted to pay the dues for any long-term Auxiliary member (ten or more years of membership) who was no longer able to manage his/her finances.

- Another unit focused on the adult children of their members who were now in care facilities. Knowing that these children were proud of their parents' service within the Legion Family, they quietly let the children know that Legion Family grave markers are only available to members who are in

good standing at the time of their passing. The children wanted to be sure their parents' service would be remembered and took over making the dues payments.

- One unit had all their renewals in place, but could not get their unit to 100 percent in membership because that required finding two new (or rejoined) members. This unit contacted the families of those with eligible children in their households and highlighted the scholarship programs available to Junior members of the American Legion Auxiliary. The unit gained three new Junior members, lifting them to 100% status.

So, let's hear from all of you now. In what innovative ways has your unit approached those members who are slow to renew their dues? These are tidbits we all need to share with each other.

Best wishes, Pony Express Riders. Let's make Department President Lisa Moore proud and prove that we are "Nebraska Strong and Faithful by Serving Veterans Always!"

Loree Hendrickson
Membership Chair

SALUTE TO SERVICEMEMBERS AWARD

What better way to honor our enlisted military personnel than to nominate one for the Auxiliary's Salute to Servicemembers Award? Do you have a son or daughter or know someone currently serving our country in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Space Force, or the National Guard? If so, why not nominate them?

This award was established in 2003 with one enlisted servicemember from each branch of the service, as well as the National Guard/Reserve, being recognized. The recipients will be guests at the American Legion Auxiliary National Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, August 23-29, 2024.

The only nomination eligibility is they must be currently serving in the United States Armed Forces.

What requirements must be completed to nominate one of these deserving service members?

- The nominating person will submit a narrative discussing the reason for the nomination.

- The servicemember will write a narrative (750 words or less) OR he/she may create a 3-minute or less video of them sharing their service both in and out of uniform. If the nominee chooses to upload a video instead of a narrative, please make sure that it is less than three minutes in length AND does not contain any copyrighted music, images, or text.

- The servicemember must be willing to be a guest of the Auxiliary as well as speak to the general assembly at the ALA National Convention.

- The servicemember must have

an endorsement from a member of their command group.

- The nominating forms and all supporting documentation must be completed and submitted by 4:00 pm Central Time Zone on June 1, 2024.

The nomination is completed online from the National website alaforveterans.org. From the Committee tab, select National Security, click National Security Program Awards, then under Salute to Servicemember Award, click Award Nomination Form and Information.

Nebraska has outstanding service members. Let us give them the recognition they deserve. Nominate someone today!

Vicki Ozenbaugh
National Security Chair

Exeter Legion Auxiliary
SPAGHETTI DINNER & BAKE SALE
Sunday, February 18, 2024
Serving 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. | Exeter Legion Hall
Dine In -or- Carry Out

Spaghetti with Homemade Meat Sauce, Corn, Tossed Salad with Homemade Dressings, Garlic Bread, and Ice Cream Sundaes

Cash Wine Bar

SPONSORED BY WILLIAM SULLIVAN UNIT 218 AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
A FREE WILL OFFERING WILL BE COLLECTED



Syracuse ALA Unit 100 sponsored a "Holiday Christmas Tree" display at the Syracuse Public Library in December. The twenty-one Christmas Trees on display were designed and decorated by youth groups and organizations in and around Syracuse. Pictured is Unit 100's patriotic tree.



The William Sullivan Auxiliary Unit 218 in Exeter will hold their annual spaghetti dinner and bake sale on Sunday, February 18, 2024. This will be held at the Legion Hall in Exeter and will be serving from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Spaghetti with meat sauce, salad with homemade dressings, garlic bread, and ice cream sundaes will be served. Free will donations will be collected. A cash wine bar will be available. There will also be a generous selection of homemade items for the bake sale.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

"It is not good that the man should be alone." - Genesis 2:18

February 3, 2024, is the 81st anniversary of the sinking of the United States Army Transport Dorchester. In 1948, February 3rd was designated by Congress as Four Chaplains Day! The Chaplains gave their life jackets to four young men instead of keeping them for themselves as they ran out of life jackets. These four Chaplains had the opportunity to save themselves, but decided to save younger men instead. Survivors state that the

Chaplains stood together, with their arms linked together, singing hymns and praying together as the boat sank.

They knew God was with them and they were not alone, as they had one another to be there together. We honor this day on or near February 3rd for the Four Chaplains and 668 other men who died when the Dorchester sank.

When you feel like you are alone, know you are not alone. We as a Legion family do not stand alone; we are a family! It might not be a

perfect family, but we are there for one another through the good, the bad, and everything in between.

More information can be found at www.legion.org/honor/guidelines-honoring-four-chaplains. Or google Four Chaplains Foundation to read more information on this amazing story and not being selfish. With God's love and guidance, like the Four Chaplains, we will never be alone.

*Vicki Cyboron
Department Chaplain*

HUM YOUR WAY INTO SPRING

And now, here we are. In the dark, dank, and never-ending days of winter. Few people are truly happy with isolation, and even fewer understand when their crankiness and grumpy nature can be a sign of loneliness. But, take heart! The days are getting longer, a minute at a time --- and Spring is creeping ever closer to ending our Winter sentence.

If it is all just too much to handle, Nurse Jean is here to give you a tip to shake off the winter blues: humming! I know it sounds silly, but humming is something you do when you're happy! What in the world is humming supposed to do?

Believe it or not, humming has significant health benefits:

- lower blood pressure and heart rate
- increased levels of nitric oxide, which help oxygen and nutrients flow freely in the body
- increased lymphatic circulation
- increased levels of melatonin, to aide in sleep cycles
- releases endorphins and oxytocin

So, how to start? Think of your favorite childhood song and try to hum your way through it. Think of a song that was played at your wedding. Play a game of name that tune with a friend. Hum to the beat of your walking --- try "Camptown

Ladies," "I've Been Workin' on the Railroad," or your favorite hymn or patriotic song. If you still feel the cranks, think of a cranky song. (My most frequent is "I don t wanna work; I just wanna bang on the drum all day" or "Show me the way to go home; I'm tired and I wanna go to bed.")

Most positive changes start with simple habits. My prayer is that you hum your way into Spring renewed and joyful.

Keep Singing!

*Jean Vackiner
Department Music Chair*

In Memoriam

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DATES TO REMEMBER

FEBRUARY

- 14 Valentine's Day - Legion Family Recruiter Award
- 15 March/April Newsletter Deadline
- 19 President's Day - Department Headquarters closed

MARCH

- 1 Girls State Applications due to Department
- 1 Scholarship Deadline to Dept. HQ. (see ABC book or website)
- 10 Deadline for April/May Issue of "The Star"
- 10 Daylight Savings time begins - Spring Forward
- 15 Americanism Essays due to Chairman
- 15 Happy Birthday American Legion
- 17 St. Patrick's Day
- 23 Dept. Juniors Convention, St. Paul
- 31 Easter

APRIL

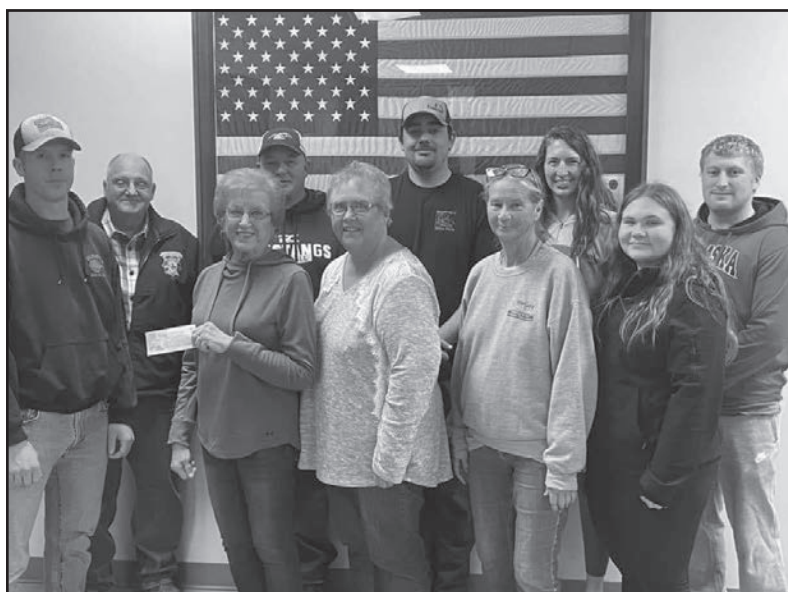
- 15 Military Kids Day - Wear Purple
- 20 Poppy Posters due to Chairman
- 20 Narrative & History Books due to Historian

FOR YOUR ADVANCED PLANNING

- June 2-8, 2024 ALA Cornhusker Girls State - Lincoln, NE
- June 20-23, 2024 Department Convention, Kearney, NE
- Aug 23 - Aug 29, 2024 National Convention, New Orleans, LA

SERVING VETERANS: VETERANS DAY 2023

- Gretna's American Legion Auxiliary presented their own "Quilts of Honor" to 38 veterans during programs in three area facilities on Friday, November 10, 2023.
- Unit 216 member, Irene Harris, celebrated 50 years of membership and was presented with a quilt at the annual Veteran's Day dinner on Saturday, November 11 at Gretna Legion Post 216. The Auxiliary, including junior members, served the dinner sporting their festive aprons.
- "Wish List" items were collected and given to the VA, Fisher House & Papillion Community Living Center.



President Marge Suchy and Treasurer Susan Kliment, representing Valparaiso American Legion Auxiliary Unit 371, presented a check for \$1000 to the Valparaiso Fire Department toward the purchase of a new ambulance for the community.

