

Judy Walters Elected As State Commander



Judy Walters of Ainsworth was elected and installed as the Commander of the Nebraska American Legion during the 107th Annual Convention held June 26 - 29, 2025, in Columbus.

Walters is eligible for The American Legion through her service in the US Navy. She has been a member of The American Legion and Post 79 for 45 years. Walters has served as Department Senior Vice Commander, Area D Vice Commander, District 1 Commander, Post Commander, and Post Service Officer.

Judy resides in Ainsworth and has a son, Colin, a daughter, Eileen, and three grandchildren. Walters retired from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services after 28 years and then worked seven years as the Veterans Service Officer for Brown, Rock and Keya Paha Counties in Nebraska. She is a member of St. Pius X Catholic Church.

Other officers serving for the 2025 – 2026 year are Department Senior Vice Commander Doug Frahm of Amelia, Area A Vice Commander Gary Davis of Pender, Area B Vice Commander Kelly Hanvey of Center, Area C Vice Commander Martin Neal of Hickman, and Area D Vice Commander Cliff Rininger of Rushville, National Executive Committee Jim Costello of Bellevue, Alternate National Executive Committee John-Henry Percy, District 1 Commander Jerry Fullerton, District 2 Commander Gerald Bouska, District 3 Commander Jeff Finken, District 4 Commander Kent Holmes, District 5 Commander Geoffery Florom, District 6 Commander Brian Rapp, District 7 Commander Virgil Blum, District 8 Commander James Carmona, District 9 Commander Amie Moores, District 10 Commander Chuck Tuttle, District 11 Commander Robert Eyer, District 12 Commander David Stander, District 13 Commander Kevin McKinney, and District 15 Commander Ronnie Hindmand.

Department Seeking Applications for Assistant Adjutant

The Assistant Adjutant position is currently vacant and the Department is looking to get a replacement onboard quickly.

The majority of time as Assistant Adjutant is spent managing Department Programs like Legion Baseball, Junior Law Cadet, Oratorical, Scholarships, and County Government Day. The Assistant Adjutant also assumes other duties as directed by the Department Adjutant. The job is full-time with very good benefits.

Please submit resume/application (and redacted DD-214) to HQ's no later than August 22nd with interview(s) following shortly after. For more information please contact Adjutant Martin at HQ and he will be happy to answer them.

National Convention in Tampa, Florida

The 2025 National Convention will be held August 22 - 28 at the Courtyard/Residence Inn in Tampa, FL. Delegates should plan to arrive Saturday the 23rd and depart Thursday the 28th (late afternoon). Rooms are \$132.48 including tax. This is a change from the previous hotel. Legion HQ's, Aux HQ's and SAL HQ's are at other hotels. Please call the Department for more information @ 402-464-6338



Homecoming Banquet

Department Commander
Judy Walters
Ainsworth Post 79 – Ainsworth, NE

Saturday, September 13, 2025
Ainsworth American Legion Post 79
255 N Woodward Street – Ainsworth, NE 69210

Come join Department Commander Judy Walters for dinner.

Social Hour is 5:30 p.m. and Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

Price: \$20.00 per plate

Contact Judy Walters for more details at 402-760-1282 or mail checks to:

Judy Walters
520 E 7th Street
Ainsworth, NE 69210

Make checks out to "Judy Walters" and indicate how many tickets are desired and all the names of those attending. Please RSVP by September 1.

Reminder: There will be a cash bar for all to enjoy during dinner.

Dress is Business Casual

Number of tickets: _____

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

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

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

2025 MEMBERSHIP GOAL: 22,300 JULY 15TH TOTAL: 20,261 – 90.86%

DISTRICT 1 - 95.46%	DISTRICT 2 - 92.69%	DISTRICT 11 - 92.58%	DISTRICT 8 - 92.21%	DISTRICT 5 - 91.30%
DISTRICT 12 - 91.22%	DISTRICT 7 - 90.74%	DISTRICT 13 - 90.65%	DISTRICT 9 - 90.08%	DISTRICT 6 - 89.96%
DISTRICT 4 - 89.67%	DISTRICT 10 - 89.57%	DISTRICT 15 - 87.99%	DISTRICT 3 - 85.77%	





Commander's Corner

Judy Walters
Department Commander





I want to thank everyone for their support and for placing their confidence in me as your Department Commander for 2025-2026. I am looking forward to traveling the state of Nebraska, meeting all members of the Legion Family.

My theme this year is Servant Leadership, which is a management philosophy that emphasizes serving others first rather than seeking personal gain or power. The three Cs of servant leadership are compassion, character, and competence. **Compassion** is about demonstrating empathy and genuine care for the well-being of others, prioritizing their needs over your own as a leader. **Character** refers to the leader's integrity, honesty, and ethical behavior. It's about being trustworthy and acting in accordance with one's values. **Competence** signifies the leader's ability to perform their duties effectively and demonstrate expertise in their field. It's about having the skills and knowledge to lead and guide others successfully.

My project for the year is the Activities Department for the Domiciliary Unit at Hot Springs, SD. The residential ADS program is an 8-week intensive program within the Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (Domiciliary). Their goal is to help them learn how to cope with life stressors without the use of alcohol or drugs, and to assist the veterans in acquiring relapse prevention skills. The money will be used to provide extracurricular activities for the veterans.


It's hard to believe, but the start of a new membership year is now underway. This year should have a better start than last year, as the first dues notices are expected to be sent out in July. Let's do what we can to get as many paid memberships as possible by the end of December.

I am looking forward to a great year working with all of you.

The first and most important choice a leader makes is the choice to serve, without which one's capacity to lead is severely limited.


— Robert Greenleaf, author and founder of the modern servant leadership movement

“Compassion, Character, & Competence”



Rider's Rally

Dan Willets
ALR Liaison



Greetings fellow American Legion Riders and American Legion Family!

For those of you who were not in attendance at the Annual Convention in Columbus at the end of June, I would like to use my first article submission to introduce myself to you. First, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mike Reimers for his past service as State Liaison and Danny Stefka (and many others I have yet to meet) who give of their time and efforts to ensure that the Nebraska ALR group is successful. My hope is to build upon that which the many prior and current members have worked to create and with your cooperation to see the ALR continue to prosper and grow.

I have been a member of the American Legion for several years (not all continuous) and I am currently entering my second year as the ALR Chapter 53 Director in Grand Island. My origins are Lexington, NE where I graduated from High School in 1979. Since then I have lived in various states and foreign countries of which I have truly enjoyed; these experiences have helped me to fully appreciate the freedoms and standard of living that we are blessed with in this great nation and state that we are lucky enough to call home. I retired in May 1999 after not quite 21 years of service in the NEARNG, the USAF, and the NEANG. I moved to Grand Island in 2022 after my retirement from my civilian employment after 30 years in the field and a cushy office chair. I am married and I have three grown children, three grown stepchildren, and six grand/step-grandchildren.

As we enter the second half of the summer, there will be several opportunities for us to gather in groups and support each other at the various events our chapters sponsor. We will also have the honor to gather, as requested, to help the families of veterans, first responders, etc. to pay respect to their deceased loved ones with flag lines and escorts. Never underestimate the impact that you have in fulfilling these duties.

Moving forward, please forward all your Chapter activities, i.e., mileage, group events, volunteer events and hours, or any other information you feel is noteworthy to me. Also, I would like to receive a list of all Chapter officers and contact information so I can begin to compile a master list.

I am available by phone at 308-550-2648, email: dwillets61@gmail.com, FB, or Messenger. My promise to you is this; I will respond to every email, text, phone call, message, etc. Any time, any reason, any question, feel free to reach out to me. Two of our most valuable tools are communication and coordination. We as a statewide organization need to utilize these tools to be truly successful.

As always, ride safe and God Bless America and the Legion family!

NEBRASKA AMERICAN LEGION

Department Headquarters Office


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Department Officers

Commander.....Judy Walters, Ainsworth
Senior Vice Commander.....Doug Frahm, Amelia
Area A Vice Commander.....Gary Davis, Pender
Area B Vice Commander.....Kelly Hanvey, Center
Area C Vice Commander.....Martin Neal, Hickman
Area D Vice Commander.....Cliff Rininger, Rushville
Adjutant.....Eric Martin, Lincoln
Programs Director.....Vacant
Chaplain.....Steve Witmer, York
Historian.....Jennifer Laux, Omaha
Judge Advocate.....Joshua Stevenson, Papillion
Finance Officer.....Mark Novak, Dawson
Sergeant-At-Arms.....Fred Craigie, Lincoln
Assistant Sergeant-At-Arms.....Gene vonForell, Crawford
Service Officer.....Levi Bennett, Lincoln
National Executive Committeeman.....Jim Costello, Bellevue
Alternate NECman.....John-Henry Percy, Papillion

District Commanders

Dist. 1.....Jerry Fullerton, Cody
Dist. 2.....Gerald Bouska, Atkinson
Dist. 3.....Jeff Finken, South Sioux City
Dist. 4.....Kent Holmes, Scottsbluff
Dist. 5.....Geoffrey Florom, North Platte
Dist. 6.....Brian Rapp, Grand Island
Dist. 7.....Virgil Blum, Omaha
Dist. 8.....James Carmona, Omaha
Dist. 9.....Amie Moores, Elwood
Dist. 10.....Charles Tuttle, Nelson
Dist. 11.....Robert Eyer, Jansen
Dist. 12.....David Stander, Weeping Water
Dist. 13.....Kevin McKinney, Tecumseh
Dist. 15.....Ronnie Hindmand, Lincoln



The NEBRASKA

Legionnaire

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Amanda Washburn, Editor
Eric Martin, Publisher's Representative

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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: _____

Email Address: _____


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 awashburn@nebraskalegion.net



It's History

Jennifer Laux
Department Historian



American Legion Department of Nebraska History Word Search


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

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

- August 1960 (65 years ago)**
- Bill **ABERNATHY**, 17-year old from Omaha Central High School, was elected the 1960 **GOVERNOR** of Cornhusker Boys State. Following his election, Governor Abernathy announced a five-point program to be introduced to the Boys State **LEGISLATURE** including relieving farm surplus through shipments of grain to poor countries, school district reorganization, state income tax, increased industrialization of Nebraska’s basic resources and a pledge to rededicate ourselves to the American way of life.
 - LINCOLN** Post 3 pulled out front of Omaha in total membership to become the largest post in the state. Whether Omaha is going to stand still for this remains to be seen.
 - The **CHADRON** Legion took part in the recent dedication of a new 50 Star **FLAG** at the Chadron Post Office. Taking part in the **CEREMONIES** were the Legion, VFW, National Guard and Boy Scouts. The Boy Scout troops brought down the old flag and raised the new one at the conclusion of the short program.
- September 1930 (95 years ago)**
- Organization of a state vigilante or **EMERGENCY** law enforcement group is being proposed by Department Commander Marcus **POTEET** and a letter to that effect has been sent to all posts. The plan is for the Legion to offer its services to the city, county and state law enforcement bodies under certain emergency conditions. The recent series of bank holdups and other robberies in the state brought about the plan.
 - A joint **CONVENTION** in 1933 of the Nebraska and Iowa Departments at Omaha and Council Bluffs is a proposal of Department Commander Poteet. Poteet expressed this desire in a speech at **OMAHA** on September 10. Such a joint convention, he claims, would bring together more than 50,000 ex-service men and former buddies from these two states.
 - Past Department **CHAPLAIN** George **JONAITIS** of **STANTON** gave a quart of his blood to John Gurtner, 62, in a blood transfusion operation at a local hospital last month. Gartner, a convert of Father Jonaitis was injured in an auto accident and when his physician could not get volunteers to give their blood, he telephoned Father Jonaitis who rushed from his home to contribute the needed blood.


- September 1940 (85 years ago)**
- Legionnaire delegates to Department Convention at Norfolk again demonstrated the fact that the American Legion is an unselfish and patriotic organization and that members meet rather than shirk their responsibilities. A resolution was presented and adopted favoring **CONSCRIPTION**, or the registration of men, up to 65 years of age.
 - Nebraska honored General John J. **PERSHING**, commander of the AEF during the World War, on occasion of his 80th birthday. A program was held in the senate chamber of the state house in Lincoln on Friday evening, September 13th. Department Commander Walter **ROBERTS** gave a short address after which a portrait of Pershing sent from Washington for the occasion was unveiled.

“Legionnaire in the Spotlight” is a new article in each issue. Please send in submissions to awashburn@nebraskalegion.net or mail them to Headquarters. Please limit them to 800 words and two pictures. Please call Amanda at 402-464-6338 with any questions.



Straight Talk

Levi Bennett
Detachment Service Officer



Honoring Nebraska Veterans: Accredited Veteran Service Officers and VA Memorial Benefits Information

Nebraska veterans have a unique advantage when it comes to accessing the benefits they’ve earned, thanks in part to the wide availability of American Legion-accredited veteran service officers throughout the state. These officers, often located in county offices, are specifically trained and certified to represent veterans before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Their accreditation means they have undergone rigorous vetting and receive annual training through the American Legion or other VA approved training courses to stay current on policy updates and procedural changes within the VA.

While no veteran service officer can know everything, working with an accredited officer significantly improves a veteran’s chances of successfully navigating the complex VA system. These professionals serve as guides, advocates, and trusted advisors in helping veterans receive the compensation, healthcare, education, and memorial benefits they have earned through their service to our nation.

One newer benefit available through the VA is the Commemorative Plaque and Urn program, introduced on June 10, 2024. This new benefit allows families of cremated veterans whose remains are not interred to honor their loved ones in a respectful and meaningful way. However, this option carries certain legal implications that must be carefully considered before deciding.

What Are the VA Plaque and Urn Benefits?

VA offers either a wall-mounted commemorative plaque or an urn designed to hold cremated remains. This program applies specifically to veterans who were cremated and whose remains are not buried or stored in a cemetery or columbarium. Importantly, families may only choose one of these two items and forfeit VA burial benefits.

Eligibility and Limitations

To be eligible, the veteran must have served honorably after April 6, 1917, or died while on active duty. Additionally, the full remains of the deceased must be in possession of the family.

However, there is a critical limitation: accepting either the plaque or the urn means the veteran becomes permanently ineligible for burial in a VA national cemetery and may limit the benefit of being interred in state veteran cemetery. **This includes the loss of eligibility for a government-provided headstone, marker, niche cover, or medallion.** According to VA, this decision is irreversible, even if the plaque or urn is returned later.

Alternatives for Families

For those who wish to keep future burial options open, there are other commemorative benefits available that do not affect burial eligibility. These include the **Presidential Memorial Certificate**, a paper document signed by the sitting President, and the **Veteran’s Burial Flag**, which is typically presented during funeral services.

These alternatives offer meaningful ways to honor a veteran’s service without sacrificing future memorial opportunities.

In conclusion, whether seeking help navigating VA benefits or choosing how to memorialize a loved one, Nebraska veterans and their families are strongly encouraged to consult with their local accredited veteran service officer. These professionals are invaluable resources, ensuring that veterans are honored and supported in every step of their journey.



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POW/MIA

Boyd Yochum
POW/MIA Liaison



I was honored to be asked to speak to the National League of POW/MIA Families at their annual meeting in Omaha this past June. This was to be held in conjunction with the DPAA Annual Report. I advised that Omaha during the College World Series could be problematic. As it turned out, the annual meeting was cancelled because of “logistical issues.”

I was always taught not to speak evil of the dead, but the 1993 so called McCain Act is the problem, and that needs to be reversed. The biggest problem that the League of POW/MIA Families encounters is the fact that all POW/MIA files since World War II have been classified, and families are not able to get information on their loved ones. Using Vietnam as an example: there are files in the Department of Defense that are classified. Much of my research drafting these articles for the Legionnaire is limited because of classified files.

Operations in Laos and Cambodia were not commanded by the Department of Defense. When our American service men were sent into these countries, they were under control of the CIA and the State Department. Records and files, because of the McCain Act, are classified.

A group dedicated to finding out information on POW/MIA’s, Task Force Omega, has respectfully asked President Trump to use an Executive Order to reverse the McCain act, and de-classify all records and files of POW/MIAs since The Great War, over 100 years ago, and including all conflicts and police actions the United States has been involved with.

No one that is a POW/MIA should have classified files that only ask, Why? Remaining families and the American public deserve to know what happened to their loved ones. Why is it a secret? Release the files and tell the truth. . .

The remains of Erin H Schopp from Plymouth, Nebraska were identified and accounted for by DPAA, January 24, 2025. Services were held at the Plymouth Community Center July 18, 2025. We thank all Legionnaires that were able to come out and pay tribute to our fallen soldier.

What we know: Schopp served with HQ Battery of the 59th Coast Artillery Regiment in the Philippines during World War II. Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan Peninsula on April 9, 1942, and of Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942. He was captured on Corregidor Island, and interned in the notorious Cabanatuan Prison Camp in Nueva Ecija Province, where he died on January 1, 1943.

At its peak, Cabanatuan held approximately 8,000 American and Filipino prisoners of war that were captured during and after the Fall of Bataan.

Conditions were poor, with food and water extremely limited, leading to widespread malnutrition, malaria and dysentery. By the time the camp was liberated in early 1945, approximately 2,800 Americans had died at Cabanatuan.

Schopp was buried, along with other Americans, in a common grave at the local Camp Cemetery. Following the war, Graves Registration personnel exhumed those buried at the cemetery and relocated remains to a temporary U.S. Military Mausoleum near Manila. Remains unable to be identified at the time were buried at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial as unknowns.

In 2018, unidentified remains were disinterred and sent to the DPAA Laboratory for analysis and Schopp’s remains were not found to be among them. In December 2020, remains from another common grave were exhumed for further study. Ultimately, the laboratory analysis established an association between one set of the unknown remains and Schopp.

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced February 14, 2025 that U.S. Army Private Erwin H Schopp, 30, who was captured and died as a prisoner of war during World War II, was accounted for January 25, 2025.


2025 Junior Law Cadet



law enforcement driving, internet crime, and radar use. Evening classes were devoted to accident and crime investigation, fingerprinting and polygraph techniques, and other special topics.


Three young men and two young women were selected from the participants for performing above and beyond during the week. Outstanding Boy Cadet – Grant Barnes of Gretna; Outstanding Girl Cadet – Madison Reilly of Albion; Outstanding Boys Driving Ability – Caden Rainforth of Milford; Outstanding Girls Driving Ability – Adison Schuessler of Omaha; Outstanding Boys Marksmanship – Jacob Zalesky of Ashland; Outstanding Girls Marksmanship – no girl cadet due to rain at the range that day.





S.A.L. Notes

Todd Kabella
Detachment Commander



I am honored to have been elected Detachment Commander at the recently completed detachment convention. I have been a Nebraska resident for the majority of my life and am proud to represent our state and the men of this organization.

The key word for the rest of this year is MEMBERSHIP. As of the June 30, 2025 membership report, Nebraska is sitting 8th out of 8 detachments in the Midwest Region. We are currently 500+ members short of the 7080 member goal set for 2025. Now we have to work twice as hard because the 2026 membership year started July 1st and we can’t possibly allow over 500 of our brothers memberships to go unrenewed. If you are one of the members that has not yet paid their 2025 dues, please remember why you became a member of the SAL in the first place. Renewing couldn’t be simpler, visit mylegion.org and renew online or reach out to your squadron adjutant to get it taken care of.

Veteran suicide continues to be an extremely important issue, so don’t forget about the “Be The One” initiative. You can download the “Be The One” app if you have a smartphone. If you or someone you know needs help, remember that the crisis hotline number is 988 and if you are a veteran press 1.

Make sure to turn in the Squadron Officer Reports following your local elections. It is vitally important that the detachment has the correct contact information for your elected officers. It is also not too late to submit your Consolidated Squadron Reports (CSR). If they have not been submitted yet, you have missed out on the possibility of qualifying for national awards, but the data is extremely important nonetheless.

What activities is your squadron planning for the second half of the year? Keep the Four Pillars of The American Legion in mind when planning events; Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth. Some ideas could be a Halloween “Trunk or Treat” for the kids in your area, hosting a Veterans Day meal to honor those that have served or something as simple as a pizza party on game day at one of our veterans homes.



Sons of The American Legion Membership As of July 15, 2025		
District	2024 Members	2025 Members
1	310	299
2	621	550
3	234	237
4	357	341
5	152	138
6	1,367	1,317
7	741	785
8	836	854
9	307	289
10	356	302
11	1,111	1,005
12	236	257
13	126	126
15	135	133
Total	6,889	6,634

Membership Minute
Steve Bartos, Membership Chairman

The Department Convention is history, and we’re off and running with Commander Walters in the 2026 membership year. Let’s make it a good one.

There is no doubt that we had some struggles with membership for 2025. The dues increases adopted by both the national organization and the Department of Nebraska obviously had some effect. For administrative reasons, our first dues notice from Indianapolis was delayed. That, too, got us behind in the race.

Better news for this year. Dues, hopefully, will remain stable for a while. And the 2026 dues notice is not late. In fact, some Legionnaires received their renewal notices before the end of June --- and they are paying them. I thank them for that. We need to build momentum with early renewals so that we can also concentrate on recruiting.

We’re going to have another Early Bird Drawing this year. Those members who pay their dues annually and those who are current with a multi-year membership and have their dues paid and received at the Department Headquarters by September 2nd will be included in the drawing. Five names will be drawn for \$200 each.

Renewing online prior to September 2nd ensures that your name will be in the drawing.

A separate drawing will be held after January 1 for all Department Life and Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) members.

We really need to concentrate on recruiting this year. I recently took a look at the living members in my own post for whom a birthday was included in the database. There were 779 such members, and they were distributed as follows:

- Over 80 years of age --- 344 --- 44.16%
- 70 – 80 years of age ---- 311 --- 39.92%
- 60 - 70 years of age ----- 65 -- 8.34%
- 50 – 60 years of age ---- 44 -- 5.65%
- 40 – 50 years of age --- 10 --- 1.23%
- Under 40 years of age --- 5 -- 0.64%

I have to confess that I was surprised at the severity of the unequal distribution of the members --- but not particularly shocked since I monitor and was aware that my post lost about 70 members to post everlasting in the last 12 months. About half of those 70 passed away after they had renewed for the year, and about half before they had a chance to renew. Regardless, it’s a significant loss and one that cannot be solved with renewals alone.

Please do what you can to help on both fronts --- renewals and recruiting. The headquarters Post 500 remains a source of members. Just about every Legionnaire has a relative --- siblings, children, and grandchildren, perhaps ---- who is eligible to be a member. Past Department Commander Dave Bruckner is on the Department Membership Committee, and he has said more than once that he approaches prospective members with the idea that an American Legion membership is an insurance policy of sorts. A strong American Legion ensures that our veterans’ benefits will always have a powerful voice defending them.

Have a nice August.

New Department Adjutant
Eric Martin



During the Department Convention Eric Martin was appointed and installed as the new Department Adjutant.

Eric will be moving from his current role as Assistant Adjutant and Activity Director. He is working to become familiar with the programs and all other aspects of his role within The American Legion.

Eric lives in Lincoln and has three children. He has recently retired from the Army National Guard after 22 years of service. He enjoys being outdoors, spending time with his family and catching some American Legion baseball games.

When you run into him, please send him a ‘thanks’ for all he is doing for the American Legion and its family.



Chaplain’s Corner

Steve Witmer
Department Chaplain

The American Legion, Department of Nebraska has just elected new leadership from the Department Commander to the leadership of each area, district, post, auxiliary, squadron, and chapter. The leaders that have been chosen may or may not be of each member’s choice. But Romans 1:1-2 tells us; “1Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God. 2 Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement.”

In order for the American Legion to be successful, we all must support and work with all that are put in authority over us. Only by working together and supporting each other will the American Legion be, not only successful, but at the same time, glorify our creator God. My prayer is that everyone outside the American Legion that is watching what we do will not only see success, but also God’s continued glory and blessings.

College World Series Team Host



The Nebraska American Legion just completed its fourth year as just one of eight organizations to be a Team Host to the Men’s College World Series. Adjutant Dave Salak and NEC Jim Costello take the lead in working directly with the team to ensure their time in Omaha is memorable. This year, we hosted the Murray State Racers and met a lot of great coaches and talented ball players.

Head Coach Dan Skirka was presented with a Nebraska Admiralty by Jim and Dave at their team lunch.


Jim and Dave want to send a personal “Thank You” to the Nebraska Printing Center who donated a beautiful banner for us to use to advertise the Nebraska American Legion involvement with the Men’s College World Series and to all of the volunteers that helped this year.

They will be sure to keep all of you updated as to the 2026 season when it rolls around.

VETERANS MISSION OF MERCY DENTAL CLINIC | SEPTEMBER 26-27



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2025 Department Convention - Columbus



NEC Jim Costello presented National Commander James LaCoursiere and National Historian Jennifer Laux with an Admiralty for the Great Navy of Nebraska. Pictured (L to R) National Historian Jennifer Laux, National Commander James LaCoursiere, and NECman Jim Costello.



Commander Yochum presented the 2025 Nebraska and Midwest Region Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award to Shane Maloley. Pictured (L to R) Commander Yochum, Shane Maloley, and Americanism Chair Mike Landkamer.



Commander Yochum presented citizenship medals to outstanding Legionnaires in the different Districts. Pictured front (L to R) District 2 recipient Thomas Nelson, District 5 recipient Joseph Wiezorek, District 10 Commander Charles Tuttle, District 7 recipient Michael Landkamer, District 6 Commander Burdette Chappell, District 1 recipient Charlie Kyser, District 3 recipient Randy Lukken, District 9 recipient Michael Harris, District 8 recipient Bruce Husted, District 12 recipient Todd Hintze, District 15 recipient Bruce Gubser, District 13 Vice Commander Larry Borchert, and Commander Yochum.



Commander Yochum presented the 2025 Teacher-of-the-Year Awards. Pictured (L to R) Commander Yochum, Middle School Teacher Kerry Lyn Reker of DC West, High School Teacher Christopher Work of Plattsmouth, and Americanism Chair Mike Landkamer.



Commander Yochum presented the 2025 Nebraska and Midwest Region Firefighter/EMS Officer of the Year Award to Brent Bergstrom. Pictured (L to R) Commander Yochum, Brent Bergstrom, and Americanism Chair Mike Landkamer.



The Crowbar Award was presented to Martin Neal. Pictured (L to R) Commander Yochum and Martin Neal.

2025 Cornhusker Boys' State



Lucas Noll of Omaha Westside High School was elected the 2025 – 26 Boys' State Governor and awarded the Bob Riddle Traveling Governor's Trophy. Pictured (L to R) Lucas Noll and Boys' State President Doug Boldt.



Each town nominated an outstanding citizen. Pictured (L to R) Roosevelt Wilken, Tyler Cape, Reece Santamaria, William Pool, Edwin Naranjo Aranda, Louis Loya, Callaway Seip, and Rodney Tuttle Jr.



Four young men were selected to represent our state during Boys' Nation. Pictured (L to R) Rodney Tuttle Jr (alternate), Reece Santamaria (delegate), Edwin Naranjo Aranda (alternate), and Roosevelt Wilken (delegate).



The American Legion Samsung Scholarship Recipient was Ethan Samuelson of Kearney Catholic High School. Pictured (L to R) Ethan Samuelson and Boys' State President Douglas Boldt.



Andel Rivangow was selected as the Coach Larry Frost Outstanding Athlete. Pictured (L to R) Athletic Director Marcus Donner and Andel Rivangow.



Members of the Nebraska American Legion and Sons of The American Legion helped hand out t-shirts to the Boys' State Delegates during check-in. 301 delegates graduated the week long program.



Ackles, Thomas A., Hastings, Vietnam
Albers, Kenneth E., Lincoln, Vietnam
Anderson, James R., Ashland, Vietnam
Anderson, Robert, Omaha, Vietnam
Arlt, Kenneth J., Columbus, Vietnam
Armstrong, William, Blue Hill, Vietnam
Arthur, Charles, Rushville
Atherton, Carol A., Omaha, Vietnam
Austin, Don, Pleasant Dale, Vietnam
Avery, Harold E., Grand Island, Korea
Baier, Stanley G., Wayne, Vietnam
Bankson, Dean, Central City, Korea
Barrett, Marvin D., Clearwater, Korea
Bartels, Ronald, Omaha, Vietnam
Bartlett, Richard, Chappell
Bauer, Allen A., Lincoln, Korea
Bell, Edward L., Newman Grove
Beyersdorf, Max, North Platte, Korea
Bigge, Henry W., Fullerton, Korea
Billesbach, Richard R., North Platte, Vietnam
Black, Ralph L., Neligh
Blackburn, James M., Neligh, Vietnam
Blanchard, Robert, Ceresco, Vietnam
Blunt, Marrion L., Fairbury, Vietnam
Booth, Ronald, Nebraska City
Bouc, Emil L., Columbus, Korea
Boukal, August H., South Omaha, WWII
Bourg, Edward J., Holstein, Korea
Boyd-Wittrock, Diane L., South Sioux City, Persian Gulf
Brandt, Daniel, Hallam, Vietnam
Bristol, Douglas R., Fairbury, Lebanon/Grenada
Broberg, Elliott, Newman Grove, Korea
Burrows, George, Adams, Korea
Carder, Warren, Loup City, Vietnam
Carter, Donald L., Tilden, Vietnam
Carter, Jerry W., Saint Edward, Vietnam
Chaffee, Willard S., Papillion, Korea
Chinn, Rodney L., Silver Creek, Vietnam
Craker, Arthur B., Ogallala, Korea
Cronquist, William C., Beaver Crossing, Vietnam
Cummings, Jackie R., Gibbon, Vietnam
Deany, Willam L., Lincoln, Korea
Decair, Larry, Bellevue
Derville, John, Millard, Vietnam
Desilets, Martin G., Omaha, Vietnam
Divis, Donald, Fremont, Korea
Duncan, James L., Pilger, Vietnam
Duponcheel, Richard, Arnold, Vietnam
Egan, William P., Millard, Vietnam
Eggerling, Russell J., Norfolk, Korea
Faber, Bernard S., Holstein, Korea
Farrar, Robert L., North Platte, Korea
Frank, Kenneth D., Lincoln, Korea
Freauf, Arnold, Fairbury, Vietnam
Frede, Steven Lincoln, Vietnam
Fuchs, Alvin J., Columbus, Korea
Galyen, Jerry, Tilden, Vietnam
Ganow, Clyde C., Grand Island, Vietnam
Gavin, Mona M., Callaway
German, Mark A., Columbus, Vietnam
Gfeller, Roy F., Auburn, WWII
Gibson, Douglas A., Lincoln, Vietnam
Goblirsch, Albert N., Omaha, Korea
Goelz, Roger A., Blue Hill, Vietnam
Goodrich, Donald L., Blue Hill, Korea
Gould, Philip T., Lincoln, Vietnam
Graham, James A., Ashland, Persian Gulf

Grant, William C., Sargent
Haber, William D., Beemer, Korea
Hamilton, Bartlett C. II., Papillion, Vietnam
Hansen, Larry, Fremont, Vietnam
Harrison, G. W., Beemer, WWII
Hartman, Marlin F., Blue Hill, Korea
Hassler, Kenneth L., Dodge, Vietnam
Hatch, Virgil V., Alliance, WWII
Heathers, Wayne E., Curtis, Korea
Hemphill, N. D., Benson
Henn, Duane L., Culbertson, Korea
Henrichs, Dennis, Auburn, Vietnam
Herron, Eugene, Stuart, Vietnam
Hinkley, Lloyd, Lincoln, Korea
Irish, Andy L., Stuart, Vietnam
Isaac, Albert E., Paxton, WWII
Jackson, Leonard, Fremont, Korea
Jacobson, Keith M., Newman Grove, Korea
James, Rodney C., Dix, Vietnam
Jareo, David L., Papillion, Lebanon/Grenada
Jenkins, Duane, Homer, WWII
Johnson, Charles D., Jansen
Johnson, Terry R., Eustis, Vietnam
Jorgensen, Dennis A. Jr., Kearney
Joynt, Ivan E., Holstein, Korea
Kallweit, Carroll D., Madison, SAL
Kautz, Robert L., Hershey, Korea
Kavan, Norman A., Morse Bluff, Korea
Kelly, Duane E., Hardy, Vietnam
King, Ronald, Valley, Korea
Knecht, Vernon C., Homer, Korea
Koopman, John R., Columbus, Korea
Kruse, Ronald T., Wilcox, Korea
Kumm, Milford, Osmond, Korea
Kuta, Alvin J., Humphrey, Korea
Laaker, Roland, Arlington, Korea
Lacey, Charles L., Wahoo, Vietnam
Lantz, Larry E., South Sioux City, Vietnam
Laursen, Arthur A., Omaha, Korea
Linnell, Paul D., Omaha, Vietnam
Lodl, Joseph W., Morse Bluff, Korea
Ludeke, Ronald K., Oxford, Korea
Lyon, Gerald K., Newman Grove, Vietnam
Malcom, Jerry L., Wayne, Korea
Maloley, John P., Overton, Korea
Mann, Dean W., Winside, Vietnam
Marion, Freeman Jr., North Omaha, Vietnam
Martinson, Carl D., Omaha, Vietnam
Mason, Robert F., Ashland, Korea
Mazur, Leo J., South Omaha, Korea
McDonald, Thomas F., Seward, Vietnam
McFarling, Abraham G., Gretna
Merryweather, Ronald I., Morse Bluff, Korea
Meyer, Kenneth D., Creighton, Vietnam
Micheels, Marvin, Benson, WWII
Miller, Voyle D., Ceresco, Korea
Milligan, Dillard D., Benson, Vietnam
Mills, Richard, W., Millard, Vietnam
Mills, Wayne B., Broken Bow, Vietnam
Mitchell, Richard L., Benson, Vietnam
Monter, Glen, Arapahoe, Korea
Moore, John C., Beatrice, Vietnam
Moroschak, Richard J., Omaha, Vietnam
Morris, Perry L., Gothenburg, Vietnam
Mossman, Leland C., Grand Island, Korea
Murman, Elmer G., Hastings, Korea
Myers, Lowell L., Seward, Vietnam
Nelson, Jerry W., Shubert, Vietnam
Nicolas, David J., Bellwood, Vietnam
Niewohner, Bernard, Dodge, Vietnam
Noe, John N., Allen, Vietnam
Obermeier, Henry O., North Platte, Korea
Olmsted, Roger A., Edison, Vietnam

Olson, Rodney E., Cedar Rapids, Korea
Orr, Kenneth W., Lincoln, WWII
Ostdiek, Robert H., Gretna
Othling, Le Roy, Deshler, Korea
Otto, Marlin R., Ceresco
Oxford, Terry L., Denton, Vietnam
Palik, Robert, David City, Vietnam
Parker, James, Kenesaw, Vietnam
Pearson, Roger F., Bennett, Vietnam
Petersen, Leroy, Beemer, Korea
Petersen, Robert, Herman, Korea
Pieper, Glen A., DeWitt, Vietnam
Podany, Robert K., Millard
Post, Doran G., Lexington
Powers, Russell M., Dannebrog, Vietnam
Prather, Michael D., Madison, Vietnam
Preister, Gilbert, Humphrey, Korea
Prince, George E., Pierce
Pullen, Darrell G., Millard, Korea
Raabe, Paul L., Beemer, Vietnam
Rabbit, David D., Rushville
Ramaekers, Paul F., Humphrey, Vietnam
Redinbaugh, Keith D., Tilden, Korea
Reichardt, Eric J., South Sioux City, SAL
Remmenga, Steve, Bennett, Lebanon/Grenada
Rexroat, Charles M., Beemer, Korea
Rohan, Louis, Spalding, Vietnam
Roper, Harold E., Lincoln, Korea
Schaefer, John J., Seward, Korea
Schaefer, Kimberly, Columbus, Persian Gulf
Schall, Edward, York, Vietnam
Schlenker, Richard K., Arlington, Korea
Schutte, Wesley, Beemer
Scott, Harley P., Hickman, Korea
Sellon, Joseph L., Randolph
Sherman, Chevron R., Valentine, Vietnam
Shuck, Dean, Beatrice, Korea
Siegl, Adolf J., Lincoln, Vietnam
Sievrt, Craig A., Lincoln, Vietnam
Sirek, Robert W., Creighton, WWII
Smelker, Leroy, Central City, Vietnam
Smith, Daniel J., Fremont, Korea
Smith, Eric T., Palisade, Panama
Smith, Richard P., York, Vietnam
Spencer, Warren H., Lincoln, Vietnam
Stalder, Randy J., Beaver City, Vietnam
Stienblock, Gary L., South Omaha, Vietnam
Strahm, Clifford, Tilden, Vietnam
Swanson, Leland E., Ceresco
Swayze, Larry D., Blue Hill, Vietnam
Tebbe, Albert M., Blue Hill, Vietnam
Thomas, Richard L., Liberty, Korea
Thompson, Ronald D., Superior, Vietnam
Thornburg, Jim, Beatrice, Korea
Tielke, John K., Stuart, Korea
Titus, Stephen J., Lincoln, Vietnam
Todd, Robert H. Jr., Millard, Korea
Tomka, Dennis, Howells
Trotter, William R., Herman, WWII
Uhing, Francis H., Wynot, Vietnam
Vik, Marilyn J. Jr., Millard, Vietnam
Vrtiska, Ronald J., Beatrice
Walther, Dennis B., Curtis, Vietnam
Ward, Homer L., Fairbury, Korea
Warner, Leland M., North Platte, Korea
Weldon, James E., Columbus, Korea
Wenke, William S., Pender, Vietnam
Werkmeister, Marvin D., Tilden, Korea
West, Ed, Norfolk, Persian Gulf
Williams, Elizabeth A., Grand Island, Lebanon/Grenada
Winfrey, Jim D., Wolbach, Korea
Zamarripa, Arthur, Gering, Vietnam
Zarp, Dennis E., Millard, Vietnam
Zeilingner, Howard L., Dix, Korea
Zoucha, Larry A., Cedar Rapids, Lebanon/Grenada

Events Calendar

August

7 - 9 National Membership Workshop - Indianapolis
14 - 19 American Legion World Series - Shelby, NC
22 - 29 National Convention - Tampa, FL

September

1 Labor Day - Office Closed
13 Department Leadership School - Ainsworth
13 Department Homecoming - Ainsworth
27 - 29 Americanism Conference - Indianapolis, IN

October

5 - 9 Fall Meetings - Indianapolis, IN
19 - 24 DSO Training - Indianapolis, IN

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

Mail Call

Dear DEC, Department Committee Members, and Legionnaires all,

Thank you very much for the kind send off. My retirement was certainly memorable, and I felt very overwhelmed as I looked at the whole Legion Family in the audience who were there to help celebrate the occasion. (Or maybe just make sure that it was truly final this time). Either way, I thank you for your generosity with the money as well as the hat shadowbox. I wish each of you much success in your future endeavors. And again, thank you for your support to my office over the years. Sincerely,
Dave Salak

\$ 1000



NEBRASKA LEGIONNAIRES

BE AN EARLY BIRD FOR 2026!

The first NATIONAL renewal notice to Nebraska for the 2026 membership year HAS BEEN mailed from Indianapolis, and the Department Membership Committee is again this year sponsoring an Early Bird Drawing.

ALL regular members (those who pay their dues annually or are multi-year members) whose 2026 dues are paid and received in Department Headquarters by September 2, 2025 will be in a drawing for \$1000.

5 names will be drawn for a \$200 prize each this year!

HELP US BUILD MEMBERSHIP MOMENTUM!!

BE IN THE DRAWING!!



Hooper Post 18 member Gary Rold participated in an event in San Diego, CA where they honored those Vietnam Veterans who were KIA. Gary is holding a yellow ribbon for Hooper native David Hargens who was KIA in Vietnam.



Bellevue Post 37 presented Quilts of Valor to its members. Pictured (L to R) Mike Westerman, Commander Roger Nelson, and Adjutant Mike King.



Jackson Post 175 presented a certificate for 70 years of continuous membership to Marvin Schincke. Pictured (L to R) Marvin Schincke and Commander Ed Hohenstein.



Fullerton Post 151 presented certificates for 50 years of continuous member to its members. Pictured (L to R) Dennis Gabriel, Commander Chuck Delancey, and Leonard Gabriel.



Liberty Post 346 presented a certificate for 50 years of continuous membership to Gale Andrew. Pictured top (L to R) Gale Andrew and Commander Charles Barr. Pictured bottom, Liberty Post 346 conducted a flag retirement ceremony on Flag Day.



Lawrence Post 45 presented certificates for 50 years of membership to its members. Pictured (L to R) Commander Gene Mazour, Dennis Buescher, and Tom Karmazin.



Verdigr Post 259 presented certificates of continuous membership to its members. Pictured (L to R) Charles Kucera, 50 years, Commander Ian Kotrous, and Norman (Ted) Haverkamp, 70 years.



The four Schenck brothers who all served during the Vietnam era were presented with Quilts of Valor by the Grand Island Quilt of Valor Sew-ciety. Pictured (L to R) Gerald Schenck, Post 119, Harold Schenck, Post 119, Dan Schenck, Post 119, and Earl Schenck, Post 6.



Eustis Post 257 members were presented Quilts of Honor by the Prairie Quilts Guild of Holdrege. Pictured top (L to R) Frank Strong, Brad Turner, Dean Wolf, and Gwen Johnson, receiving the quilt for her late husband, Terry Johnson. Pictured bottom (L to R) Don Boerkircher, Jim Schmееckle, Stan Schurr, and Kermit Smith.

American Legion members from Cuming County were presented Quilts of Valor by the Just A Stitch Quilt Guild. Pictured front row (L to R) Steve Brune, Jack Gardes, and Gerald Herzinger. Pictured back row (L to R) Gary Gatzemeyer, Brian Heller, Beth Schultz, Dan Breikreutz, Joel Paulson, Ron Hurt, Cory Schinstock. Also awarded quilts but unable to attend were Chad Marksmeier, Reginald Will, Lance Peterson, and Dennis Walcheck.



Plattsmouth Post 56 members joined the Plattsmouth VFW to present the color guard for the Memorial Day program in their community.



Steele City Post and Unit 349 presented an American flag to local Postmaster Bill Scheel. Pictured (L to R) Zona Quintana and Bill Scheel.



The District 9 American Legion presented their District Cornerstone Award to Dennis Kennedy of Culbertson Post 133. This award is given out at each District 9 Convention to one member of the Distrct who has done outstanding work for The American Legion Family. Pictured (L to R) Dennis Kennedy and Lee Carskadon.



ALA Salutations!

My name is Ruth Hietbrink, and I would like to say thank you for electing me as your 2025-2026 Nebraska ALA President.

What an exciting time for me as I venture into a year full of getting to know our veterans across Nebraska

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT - RUTH HIETBRINK

and throughout the national region. I am thrilled to devote my time to helping our active-duty military, veterans, and their families.

As I become Department President, I imagine my dad and mom cheering for me as both of my parents were proud members of the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary. My father is where I get my eligibility, and I have been a member for 52 years.

This year, my theme is "Stirring Up Members." SUM will equal success. As some of you know, I am a baker, and I love stirring up things. This year my intention is to Stir Up Members to become excited about the ALA. I want to motivate

and inspire all to participate in the ALA and be active to achieve a positive goal.

Membership is an important topic that is always addressed. At the National Workshop for the incoming Department Presidents and Department Secretaries, our membership goals were developed. After looking at the goals for 2026 our percentage increase will be 1%. This is attainable for all units.

Please send me invitations to events and activities that you are planning so I can plan to attend. My goal is to meet many of you throughout 2025-2026.

The project that I want to support this year is AEF (Auxiliary

Emergency Fund). With all the devastation due to floods, fires, and tornadoes --- along with the federal government cutting some of the assistance programs --- this is important to support.

My Leadership Training and Homecoming is on September 27th at the American Legion Hall in Bennet, Nebraska. Leadership training will be at 2:00 pm, with a social hour at 5:00 pm and dinner at 6:00 pm. I would like to invite you all to attend. Look for more information in the next newsletter and on Facebook.

Ruth Hietbrink
Department President



Leadership Training and my Homecoming will be on September 27th in Bennet, Nebraska at the American Legion Hall.

Please check the newsletter or Facebook for more information. RSVP will be required.

JUNIOR PRESIDENT



Greetings from the Honorary Department Jr. President

Hello, American Legion Auxiliary family!

My name is Erica Fuchs, and for those of you who didn't get a chance to meet me at Department Convention in June, I am the newly-installed Honorary Department Jr. President. I am a member of Arlington Unit #71, being eligible for membership through both of my grandfathers, Raymond Rezabek (who served in the Nebraska Air National Guard from 1965-1971) and Robert Fuchs (who was in the Nebraska Army National Guard from 1961-1969). My mom is an Auxiliary member, my dad and two brothers are SAL members, and both of my grandmothers are Auxiliary members --- as well as an aunt. I also have two uncles in the SAL.

And that's just my *close* family members! This organization has always been a pretty big deal in my family! That's why I am honored to serve as the 2025-2026 Honorary Department Jr. President.

This year, I invite everyone across the state of Nebraska to join me in "Quilting and Comforting for our Veterans' Valor." This is my theme for the year to go with my President's Project of raising funds

to distribute to the various groups across the state which make Quilts of Valor for our nation's heroes. It is my hope that if we can supply additional funds to these quilters, more Quilts of Valor will be able to be awarded across the state.

As I make visits across the state this year, I will be taking my quilt, which my mom, Grandma Connie, and I have made to sell raffle tickets for the quilt. The winner of the quilt will be drawn at the 83rd Department Jr. Convention, which will be held in Arlington. The convention is tentatively set for Saturday, April 11, 2026.

For anyone who is a member of a quilting group that makes Quilts of Valor, or if you know the name and contact information for one of these quilting groups across the state, please contact me with the information. I would like to get a list of as many Quilt of Valor groups as possible so that my project can benefit many communities. This information can be sent to the following email address: nebrala jr. president2526@gmail.com. This email address can also be used to invite me to your events this year (both Juniors and Seniors alike). I am involved in quite a few activities in school, but I'll do what I can and accept as many invitations as possible!

Thank you so much for your support this year! I can't wait to continue "Quilting and Comforting for our Veterans' Valor" together with the whole Department of Nebraska!

Erica Fuchs
Hon. Department Jr President

SUCCESSFUL 2025 GIRLS STATE



Cornhusker Girls State & Alumni Facebook page, which brought in funds for this wonderful project. The three days of packaging produced 49,261 Mercy Meals. We contracted to do 1,700. Thank you to those who donated, and thank you to the anonymous donor who covered the extra meals.

Each year, the evaluations indicate the girls want sporting events. We listened, and this year we added an "All-Star Activities" night. Each floor was tasked to select a mascot and divide their floor into teams for flag football, kickball, tug-of-war, and cheerleading. It was a huge success. Thank you to Marcus Donner, Boys State, for assisting me in locating a field to use.

The request for plastic bags was heard, and you answered! The President's office at headquarters was over half full of bags, and bags, and more bags. From those bags (totaling over 9,000), twelve sleeping mats were hand-crocheted by Becky Topil from the "plans" that the girls made. Thank you, everyone, for the bags; and thank you, Becky, for your enthusiasm in teaching the girls how to put together the "plans" and completing the mats.

Pocket flags were folded by all the girls, and 516 will be delivered to Offutt Airforce Base to be given to deployed units.



Each girl wrote a thank you to the unit, organization, or business that sponsored them.

We went back to the election by ballot for the Primary Election on Wednesday. We even had ballot boxes! Thank you to the ALA volunteers who came to help!

Media put together a daily one-page newspaper.

The 2025 Girls State Governor is Lucy Mendenhall from Omaha Marian High School. The 2025 Girls Nation Delegates are Kansas Lohmeier from Elkhorn South High School and Josey Moore from Ravenna High School. Congratulations, Lucy, Kansas and Josey!

If you would like to see a glimpse of what the week was like, you can visit the Nebraska American Legion Auxiliary Facebook page and scroll to it or to the Cornhusker Girls State & Alumni Facebook page.

As any past Girls State staff will tell you (and I quickly learned), it is not all smooth sailing. But, we made it through! Although I and my vice chairs --- Vicki Colson and Elsa Knight --- planned the week, there are many, many, many others who made the week the success it was. Thank you, all!

Vicki Ozenbaugh
Girls State Chair

2025-2026 DEPT. OFFICERS



2025-2026 Department officers are (L to R): Secretary Roxanne Hiatt, Chaplain Vicki Colson, Historian Lori Reimers, Vice President Vicki Cyboron, President Ruth Hietbrink, NEC Vicki Ozenbaugh, and Treasurer Jacki O'Neill.





Past National President Carol VanKirk (2005-2006) completed current National President Trish Ward's visit to Nebraska with a special gift. In a special presentation at the Sutton American Legion Club on Saturday, June 28, PNP Carol presented her Past National President's pin to NP Trish Ward. The two National Presidents were able to visit at Carol's home before and after the presentation.



The poppy drive of a member of Elkhorn Unit 362 is especially unique. As a resident in Wyoming, Beth Ann Pillen and her friend Ann (shown) raised poppy contributions that were matched by her employer, Walmart. That way, the Elkhorn and Wyoming units both benefited.

EQUIPMENT DONATED TO OVAMC

Longer-term patients at the Omaha VA Medical Center (OVAMC) are often found on Floor Ten, which is houses Behavioral Health.

Cindy Iske Moore and Gretna American Legion Auxiliary Unit 216 made a very special gift possible for these patients. Cindy moved to Iowa and had a complex weight machine to shed. She and the Gretna unit fulfilled the OVAMC recreation therapists’ wish; they paid for a professional mover to set it up on that floor.

This \$2,500 total gift-in-kind allows 10 veterans per day more exercise, which can produce calming effects and develop good fitness habits.



AUXILIARY EMERGENCY FUND

- Let’s play “what if?”
- What if you lost your home to a fire?
 - What if you were in an accident and lost your source of income?
 - What if a tornado leveled your home?
 - What if your savings are depleted when recovering from a disaster?
 - What if my spouse dies and I can’t pay my utilities?

What if I was in any of those situations? What if I could help someone in a disaster or hardship scenario? What if? What if? What if?

No matter the “what if,” the Auxiliary Emergency Fund has a two-fold purpose. An ALA member with current dues paid and three years of membership is eligible to apply for up to a \$3,000 hardship or disaster grant. As an ALA member, you can contribute to the AEF so funds are available for those who need them.

Department President Ruth has chosen the AEF as her project, which means units and individual members may donate to her project. As the

AEF Chair, I will also be requesting donations to help support the AEF. Of course, there are National awards for a unit and department based on AEF donations to National. Winning and being recognized at National with an award is exciting, but “what if” we gave out of the kindness of our hearts with no intention to win an award? What if we set a goal and exceed it just because we understand the importance of the AEF?

Since the deadline to submit AEF to National is May 31, we are already behind in our giving. Therefore, I am asking you to begin “saving” your change for this vital program. One idea to get you started is to place a plastic container in your car. Whenever you get change from shopping, put the change in the container. Or you can have a special container in your home to drop your loose change in. It all adds up!

AEF --- what if you need it this year? More to come in future newsletters and The Star!

Vicki Ozenbaugh
AEF Chair

Remember to send your assignments a couple weeks before the month they are due.							
2025-2026 CENTERPIECE AND TRAY FAVOR ASSIGNMENTS							
<i>Month</i>	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
Aug.	#251 Arcadia	#218 Exeter	#266 Bennington	#302 Leigh	#7 Alliance	#36 Gering	#266 Bennington
Sept.	#11 Hastings	#290 Elwood	#353 Louisville	#84 Columbus	#36 Gering	#36 Gering	#222 Shubert
Oct.	#147 Crete	#199 Cambridge	#27 Beatrice	#357 Brunswick	#7 Alliance	#7 Alliance	#27 Beatrice
Nov.	#257 Eustis	#209 Franklin	#243 Plymouth	Private Donor	#17 Sidney	#17 Sidney	#362 Elkhorn
Dec.	#310 Gibbon	#288 Farnam	#27 Beatrice	#327 Bellwood	#7 Alliance	#36 Gering	#27 Beatrice
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: Maria Atterberry, 704 Rochelle St, Elwood, NE 68937 · 308-325-2863							

2023-2024 DEPARTMENT OFFICERS & CHAIRMEN

Department Officers

President Ruth Hietbrink 735 Washington St, Sterling, NE 68443
Vice President Vicki Cyboron 2454 7th Ave, Boelus, NE 68820
Historian Lori Reimers 2011 24th St, Central City, NE 68826
Chaplain Vicky Colson PO Box 61, Paxton, NE 69155
Secretary Roxanne Hiatt 150 NW 40th St. Lincoln, NE 68528
Treasurer Jacki O'Neill 150 NW 40th St. Lincoln, NE 68528

National Committeeperson

Vicki Ozenbaugh. 515 Rd. 18, Ohiowa, NE 68416

District Presidents

One Jean Vackiner 35878 Boiling Springs Rd, Cody, NE 69211
Two Corrine Janovec PO Box 661, Plainview, NE 68769
Three Laura Novak 1006 Dakota St, Emmersn, NE 68733
Four Terri Poley PO Box 531, Sidney, NE 69162
Five Eva Crawford PO Box 188, Mullen, NE 69152
Six Barbara Dorsey 47069 Hwy 70, Arcadia, NE 68815
Seven Nancy Patras 810 6th St, Columbus, NE 68601
Eight Lee Brauer 15015 Chicago Cr., Omaha, NE 68154
Nine Lana Bennett. 706 Ontario Ave, Elwood, NE 68937
Ten DeAnna Tuttle 4805 Porter St, Nelson, NE 68961
Eleven Mary Beth Coffey 209 Road M, McCool Jct., NE 68401
Twelve Erma Naber. 1110 Road V, Waco, NE 68460
Thirteen Bobbi Albers 71493 Hwy 50, Pawnee City, NE 68420

Department Chairmen

Advisory Vicki Ozenbaugh 515 Road 18, Ohiowa, NE 68416
Americanism Cie Kauth 205 Jackson, Belden, NE 68717
Auxiliary Emergency Fund Vicki Ozenbaugh 515 Road 18, Ohiowa, NE 68416
Cavalcade of Memories Lori Reimers 2011 24th Street, Central City, NE 68826
Children & Youth Julie Schnitzler 6355 N Winchester Ave., Kenesaw, NE 68956
Community Service Nancy Niemann 100 Trudy Ann Cr, Raymond, NE 68428
Constitution & Bylaws Gayla Schnid 303 Esplanade St., Bellwood, NE 68624
County Government Gayla Schnid 303 Esplanade St., Bellwood, NE 68624
Distinguished Guest Vicki Ozenbaugh 515 Road 18, Ohiowa, NE 68416
Education Cindy Moore 1271 60 Ave., Spirit Lake, IA 51360
Finance Karen Brink 7959 S 154th Street, Omaha, NE 68138
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Girls State Vicki Ozenbaugh 515 Road 18, Ohiowa, NE 68416
Gold Star Vicki Cyboron 5152 N 155 Ave, Omaha, NE 68116
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Leadership Tina Nelson. 503 N Brown Ave..Clay Center, NE 68933
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Membership Debra Albers 1759 Road 5200, Davenport, NE 68335
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National Security Amanda Washburn 5230 N 148th St., Lincoln, NE 68527
Parliamentarian Barbara Washburn 455 Co Rd 7, Ashland, NE 68003
Past Presidents Parley Lisa Moore 318 N Railroad, Wilber, NE 68465
Poppy Justina Birkel PO Box 64, North Loup, NE 68859
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Eastern Nebraska Donna Smith. 15103 S 84th St., Papillion, NE 68046
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Honorary Vice President Kendall Kasl Dorchester
Honorary Historian Cora Pankoke Beaver Crossing
Honorary Chaplain Kinleigh Jones Grand Island

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CONTINUOUS MEMBERSHIP AWARDS – HALLAM #294

President Doreen Cole of the Hallam American Legion Auxiliary Unit #294 awarded Continuous Membership Certificates at the Memorial Day Program at the Hallam Legion Post on May 26, 2025. The list of Auxiliary members to receive the certificates were:

Doreen Cole, Lincoln - 35 years
Lorraine Vokoun, Olympia, Washington - 25 years
Linda Eggert, Hallam - 20 years
Kathryn Kerns, Crete - 20 years
Corinna Vokoun, Lincoln - 20 years
JoAnn Miller, Lincoln - 10 years

Doreen Cole
President, American Legion Auxiliary Unit #294



Pictured (L-R) are members present that day to receive their certificates: Linda Eggert, Doreen Cole, Mary “Beth” Navratil, and Kathryn Kerns.



The new officers for Papillion American Legion Auxiliary Unit 32 were elected on June 19. Pictured in the back row (L-R) are: Historian Margaret Southworth; members at large Charlene Marchand, Tess Ward, and Cheryl Muza; and Sgt-At-Arms Leatrice Doolen. In the front row (L-R) are: President Shellie McGlade-Zeeb, Secretary/Treasurer Elizabeth Paes, and Chaplain Mary Jillson.



PURPLE HEART WREATH



District 11 Auxiliary President Cindy Lukan presented her first Purple Heart Wreath to William J. Paul, a Vietnam veteran who served in the Navy. Mr. Paul earned three Purple Hearts. Mr. Paul was a member of the Barneston American Legion Post 356, and Barneston Auxiliary President Donna Rae Graham arranged for this to be presented on Memorial Day. Mr. Paul's family came from as far away as Florida to attend.

MEMBERSHIP – THERE’S A PARTY IN THE USA



Put on your Party Hat, and “Let’s “Party” with membership. This year, we are “Stirring up the Members.” 2026 marks the 250th Birthday of the USA.



Everyone in your unit is a Membership Chairman. Nobody wants to be left out of a party, so let’s get out there and ASK!!! I am challenging each member to ask just one person to become a member. Don’t be afraid to call. ASK: Family members, Neighbors, Colleagues, Acquaintances, and sometimes perfect Strangers. When you wear your Branded Attire, you get questions. Be ready with “Why you’re a member.” Don’t forget to carry applications with you... and “hand them out like Candy.” Remember, it’s a party year!

- **Retain:** Each current member needs to renew their membership.
 - **Rejoin:** Contact “old” members who have let their membership lapse.
 - **Recruit:** We need new Members: Remember --- **Everyone in your unit is a membership chairman. Everyone in your unit should ask just one person to become a member.**
- SHARE YOUR PASSION!!!
EXCEED YOUR GOALS!**

Debra Albers
Membership Chair

SECRETARY SCRIBBLES

Be looking for donation forms in the next newsletter around mid-August. We do have poppies and continue to receive them. This year, if you really don’t need them or can do with less, this would be great. Monetary donations are happily accepted in lieu of poppy orders.

For the new 2026 membership year, you can begin submitting as soon as you have received your unit membership packet. They are all out now; so, check with your membership chairman if you have questions. You can send new applications, but I am unable to enter them into ALAMIS until September 1 and will be holding them until that date.

I have a few requests.

It is all earth-friendly to use up all those old copies of Unit Data Forms and Transmittal Sheets you have at home; but, when it comes to getting the correct information needed into the Department, only the most current forms ask for that information. We always need the personal member numbers (all nine

digits) - especially if the person is transferring. Old Data Forms don’t have a line for this number. It’s time for old forms to go into the recycle bin.

Please throw out old forms that show an incorrect current dues amount of \$22.25. The last year for that amount was 2022, so recycle them. It confuses the preparer --- and me --- if the wrong amount is submitted because that is what you are seeing on the incorrect form. This is the third year of submitting \$30.25 per Senior member, and anything else sent in will get you a phone call. Recycle those old forms.

Here are some pointers on filling out a membership application:

- They must be on the current/newest application form. This is the form that does NOT have GREAT-granddaughter as the relationship to the veteran. “Greats” are no longer eligible (for six years now). Please do not write “Great” behind granddaughter. It is an automatic denial. A rule of thumb is – don’t change or add wording to the forms.

Throw out those old forms.

- All the veteran information, including their American Legion membership ID number, must be included.
- All the correct signatures must be there. The applicant or parent/guardian must sign the application. The POST ADJUTANT – **not** the Unit Membership Chair – must sign the veteran eligibility section. Please don’t send them expecting the Department to take care of these things. You may receive it back if it is incomplete.
- The application should not be used for a previous member renewal/rejoin. Those need to go on the Transmittal sheet with the word “rejoin” written somewhere with their name.

I think what you should get out of this is if you are unsure about something, please call us and ask the question. It saves a lot of time. Happy membership submitting!!

Roxanne Hiatt
Secretary

SERVICE TO VETERANS COOKOUT – ELKHORN

A Service to Veterans Cookout was held during June 2025 at the Omaha Victory Apartments. It was organized by ALA members of Elkhorn Unit 362 and assisted by the Elkhorn Post 211 veterans and volunteers. The goal is to have

at-risk veteran residents mingle together, which they generally do only for events.

Door prizes of useful items were provided after each participant answered three questions.



Eddyville American Legion Auxiliary Unit 225 lost long-time member Ruth Yentes on April 14, 2025. She passed at the age of 100 and was a member since 1954 (71 years).



DATES TO REMEMBER

AUGUST

22 – 28 National Convention, Tampa Bay, Florida

SEPTEMBER

1 Labor Day – Department Headquarters Closed
 1 Veterans Day at the State Fair
 1 Rosewood Gavel Award Deadline
 10 Deadline for Star Articles — October/November Issue
 11 Patriots Day
 18 POW/MIA Recognition Day
 27 ALA Leadership School & President Ruth's Homecoming — Bennet, NE
 28 Gold Star Family Recognition Day

OCTOBER

13 Columbus Day—Department Headquarters Closed
 31 Halloween

CHILDREN & YOUTH

It was great to see everyone at the convention in Columbus and the excitement around Children & Youth. Some of the highlights include performing the Military Child's Table Setting Ceremony at the Luncheon; awarding Jan Steenson (Wolbach Unit #236) and Marge Suchy (Valparaiso Unit #371) as the 1st and 2nd place poster winners; and touring the Columbus Area Children's Museum.

This year, only two units reported that they had performed the Military Child's Table Setting Ceremony. The link to this article is shown here --- you can Google it and print a simple 2-page script. The items used for the ceremony --- flag, picture of military family, hand spade, birthday cake and candles, ball and glove,

ballet shoes, and flowering plant --- are fairly easy to find. If anyone would like to borrow any of the items, please contact me. The goal is to have at least 50 units perform the short ceremony this year at a meeting or event. This might be an idea for April – the Month of the Military Child.

A poster contest that highlights your family/youth events will again be held at the Convention in June 2026. The awards are \$100 for 1st place and \$50 for 2nd place. Be watching the upcoming newsletters for more information and start planning your next Children and Youth event.

*Julie Schnitzler
Children & Youth Chair*

VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION AT STATE FAIR

The Nebraska State Fair continues its tradition of honoring our Veterans. This year the fair will be hosting various activities on Labor Day, Monday, September 1. The special Veterans Program will begin at 10:30 am at the Heartland Events Center. A special Salute to Our Veterans Celebration Parade dedicated to Veterans starts at 1:00 pm. Line up begins at 12:30 pm. All American Legion Family members are invited to participate in the parade. President Ruth has entered the Department of Nebraska ALA in the parade. Please let her know if you will be attending.

All day activities include the Army National Guard Helicopter display, Veterans Art display, Nebraska Remembers our Fallen display, and the Quilts of Valor display. The Veterans Resource Fair is from 9:30 am to noon and the Six String Soldiers will perform at 5:00 pm. Veterans get in free with proper ID on Labor Day.

Thank you! Thank you to everyone for their support and help this past year!! You all made it so very memorable, and I appreciate you all so much! YOU all made Department Convention a success, and I thank you all for attending. I want to say a special thank you to all of the districts and some units who sent in quilt blocks for my President's Quilt. It was such an amazing surprise, and I will cherish it forever. I wish the best of luck to President Ruth this next year, and I know that she will do an awesome job representing Nebraska and all of our members. Nebraska is definitely in good hands for the near future. Again, thank you all for the memories this year!

Amanda Washburn
Past Dept. President 2024-25



Pictured (L-R) with Amanda's Quilt are District 13 President Michele Tegtmeier, National Leadership Chair Barb Washburn, Vice President Ruth Hietbrink, District 13 Vice President Bobbi Albers, Jean Burns, President Amanda Washburn, and Public Relations Chair Meri Hietbrink.



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 SEPT. 10, 2025.

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MUSIC

I'm baaa-aaack! Greetings from the spot behind the piano, where one sees all, knows all, but won't judge --- very often.

Have you ever been to a gathering without music? Perhaps at church, when the congregation gathers without a prelude? Walking dignitaries down an aisle? Carrying a casket to the front? It's hollow, sullen, and sad.

As a contrast, who among us cannot step just a little livelier to a cheery march tune? Feel the warmth of music as we hug each other in church? Envelop ourselves in the comfort of a hymn as we say goodbye to a loved one? Music is part of the soul of humanity. Please, do what you can to soften the corners of life with its gifts.

I would like to challenge any youth leaders this year to hold an activity day for junior members (and potential junior members). One fun activity, no matter the age, is learning to march. Marching develops coordination, camaraderie, even discipline, and lifts moods instantly.

Have a fun rest of summer --- and keep singing!

*Jean Vackiner
Music Chair*

CHAPLAINS CORNER

Oh Lord, in the morning I will direct my prayers unto thee and will look up. Psalm 5:3.

As we start a new year, the possibilities of what we can do open up. Like a new morning, we can celebrate and stir up members to do good things.

And, in all things, we give thanks. Gratitude to Our Father, to our membership, and for the work they do for the American Legion Family --- including work for our families, veterans, and communities as we are called to be servants. After we work, we celebrate.

Thank you, Father, for the opportunities to serve our fellow man using our principles of freedom, justice, and democracy. Help us have a bit of fun along the way. Amen.

*Vicki Colson
Department Chaplain*



Past Department President Virginia Nelsen presented her Past Department President's pin to Amanda Washburn. Amanda's short review of service includes 30-plus years of membership, PD Junior President, PN Junior Historian, PN Junior President, and PD President 2024-2025. "From one past national officer to another, presented with pleasure and pride to Amanda Faye."



Honorary Department Jr. President Erica Fuchs is debuting her (finished) quilt this week at the Washington County Fair in Arlington (she will be raffling the quilt with winner chosen in April at the Dept. Jr. Convention). Congratulations on your purple ribbon.

You are invited
to the South Sioux City
American Legion Auxiliary Unit 307's
10th annual
Vendor and Craft Fair
September 27, 2025
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
at American Legion Post 307,
there will also be a
bake sale and concessions
to support various projects.