



In Memoriam



Janiece M. Fischer
August 4, 1930 - November 13, 2023

JANIECE M. FISCHER

Past Department President Janiece M. Fischer died peacefully in her sleep surrounded by loving family on November 13, 2023 at the age of 93.

She met Donald Hendrick at Stevens Point Teachers College in 1948. They married in 1952, pursued careers in teaching, and had five children together (John, Kevin, Mary, Ann, and Lois). Don passed away unexpectedly in 1986. Janiece retired in 1991 after 35 years in the classroom. In 1994, Janiece met Bill Fischer. They married and spent 23 happy years together until Bill passed away in 2017.

Janiece lived life to the fullest – completing her master's degree in education, being actively involved in the Methodist Church in Tomahawk, serving on boards and committees for Central Wisconsin Educators, CESA and WEAC, and traveling to Russia, Africa, Alaska and all over the United States.

Janiece joined Bronstead-Searl Unit 93 in Tomahawk in 1974. Her eligibility was through the service of her husband Donald who served in the Army during WWII, and her father, Emmett Colvin, who served in WWI. Her husband, Bill, served in the U.S. Marine Corps during WWII.

She held many positions at the unit, district and department levels and served as Department President in 1998-1999. Her theme for the year was *Soar Like an Eagle, Be a "Fischer" for Veterans*. For her Testimonial Dinner, she referenced Isaiah 40:31, "They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak." Janiece Fischer's memory lives on as she soars heavenward.

2024 MIDWINTER RECAP

The American Legion Auxiliary had a great time at the 2024 Midwinter Conference! We had a few guest speakers: VA&R Chairman Bonnie Jakubczyk discussed needs at the VA facilities and how the Auxiliary can help; Adjutant Julie Muhle gave an inspirational speech; President Geiger, Commander Stuvengen, Commander Watry, and Legion Riders Director Doehrmann brought greetings; and Candidate for National Commander Dan Wiley briefly addressed the Auxiliary.

Dan Wiley was extremely impressed by the strong Auxiliary presence and the volume of materials donated for the service projects. He

asked how we got such a good response and President Maggie told him, "We simply asked."

Wisconsin members generously donated fabric to make approximately 125-150 tie blankets, personal hygiene products that filled hundreds of socks of love, a table full of warm winter clothing, and Valentine's Day cards for the WDVA. It was estimated that \$25,000-\$35,000 of items were donated for the Auxiliary service projects. Everything was taken to distribute to the VA hospitals and Veterans homes, centers for homeless Veterans, Veteran housing and recovery programs, or to needy Veterans in members' own communities. The ALA session was a tremendous success.

Members had FUN (including several Junior members!). We showed that the ALA is a Veterans SERVICE Organization and demonstrated our mission through ACTION.

On a side note, 7th District President Christina Petranovich and PDP Diane Weggen braved the harsh weather by camping in a box one night and raised over \$1,000 to support *Freezin' for a Reason*, with proceeds benefitting The American Legion's Troop & Family Support Fund. Many ALA members also donated pies to a Pie Auction fundraiser.

Thank you to everyone who participated at Midwinter!



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Betty Stone
 Department Chaplain
 bjstone626@hotmail.com

Psalm 3:3-4 — “You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the Lord with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill.”

PRAYER

Dear God, holy and mighty one. You are worthy of all praise, all honor. Your steadfast love amazes me each day. When I hear others around me say I am not good enough, whisper your truth in their heart and give me strength.

Lord, be with those who feel inadequate and doubt, as they care for others. Give them your love and assurance that they are your child and you love them very much. Thank you for being our creator and Father. In your most precious name, Amen.

MUSIC

Here is an idea to put music into your meetings.

Invite one of your Juniors to come to the meeting with a musical number to do at the meeting. It can be singing, dancing or playing an instrument. Maybe two or three could have a group number. Be creative and have fun!

GREETINGS FROM HEADQUARTERS

Bonnie Dorniak
 Executive Secretary/Treasurer
 608-745-0124
 deptsec@amlegionauxwi.org
 www.amlegionauxwi.org

The Auxiliary session at The American Legion Midwinter Conference was quite the success! Department leaders from The American Legion, SAL, and Legion Riders and future candidate for National Commander Dan Wiley of Kansas brought greetings. Department chairmen briefly shared information about a few Auxiliary programs. However, the highlight of the day was the service projects for our Veterans.

Approximately 60 Auxiliary members of all ages had a great time making tie blankets, creating Valentine’s Day cards, filling Socks of Love with personal hygiene products and collecting winter weather items for homeless Veterans. Members took the completed items to distribute to the various VA hospitals, Veterans’ homes, centers for homeless Veterans, or to Veterans in their own communities. Since there wasn’t enough time to finish all of the blankets, some members took the remaining fabric to do service projects with their units or districts later on.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

March 1: Scholarship application deadline.

March 15: Entry deadline for the ALA State Bowling Tournament in Medford on April 6-7 and April 13-14. Questions? Contact Jenni Syftestad at syftes@chorus.net.

April 1: ALA Badger Girls State registration deadline for delegates and alternates.

July 11-14: Department Convention at the Hilton Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton.

August 24-29: National Convention in New Orleans. Anyone interested in attending should contact their District President and ask to be nominated as a Department Alternate. Names of nominees must be submitted to department no later than July 1 for election at Department Convention.

Dan Wiley was so impressed with the number of volunteers and items donated, he asked how we garnered so much support as he would like to encourage Kansas to do something similar for their homeless Veterans. As President Maggie told him, “We simply asked! Our members are very generous.” Thank you, everyone who participated!

The national organization mailed final dues renewal notices on February 1. If you received a notice but think your dues were paid, please

verify with your Unit Membership Chairman that your payment was transmitted to department headquarters. Members may reinstate their membership by mailing a check to their unit or department headquarters or pay by credit card to the national organization (317-569-4570 or www.ALforVeterans.org).

Unit presidents are reminded to submit Unit Year-End Reports by April 15. Members should be proud of all they accomplished and report it!

CANDIDATES FOR DEPARTMENT OFFICE

Candidates for department office must email their announcement (300-350 words) with a head/shoulder photo to deptsec@amlegionauxwi.org by Monday, March 18, 2024 for publication in the *Wisconsin*.

Sue Hembrook
 Department Chairman
 genesuehem@wi.rr.com
 262-945-9791

Our “Poppy Up” puppies are getting tired. Hopefully, Santa was good to them and they got a chance to rest up during the holidays. Now we have to refresh them and urge them on. The membership team is here to help you in any way that we can so please call on us. We want to energize our pups but cannot do it without you, we need your support. Membership is not your membership chairman or District President’s responsibility. However, it is all of our responsibilities to help “mush” our pups to victory.

Some interesting facts so that we all know that membership is in fact growing. Nationally we have 1,200 more new members registering in 2023 than we did in 2022. That is the biggest increase nationwide in many years. In our Department, we had 424 new members sign up to date, 372 of which are seniors and 52 juniors. How awesome is that! District 3 deserves a shout-out – they have recruited the highest number of new members, with District 2 and District 1 close behind. Let us all follow their lead and demonstrate to everyone how awesome we are. It all starts by promoting what we do and why we do it. Get the word out about yourselves, let us spread the word. Remember that we are here to support our Veterans, military and their families. We also have a big impact on how we support our communities. Get the word out!

Fewer units are ordering new member packets and brochures. The brochures especially are an essential item to have when our communities come to our events. They outline “Who we Are, What We Do, and Why We Do It.” Please order these and use them – their information is priceless. Also, the new member packets are very informative for new members as they answer many questions and also include opportunities and benefits available to them. We all need to use these very important tools.

Please remember that what you do matters! From the member who cuts coupons for military families to those that are out there promoting our mission. It takes all of us to make this great organization thrive. Our puppies on the “Poppy Up” Team thrive on your support. We have to all reenergize ourselves to go out there and promote this great organization. The best way to do that is by example of how well we do things by working together with the entire Legion Family and by having fun doing it.

Remember the membership team of Sue, Becky and Amy need you and your support!

SCHOLARSHIPS DUE MARCH 1, 2024

The American Legion Auxiliary offers more than \$25,000 in scholarships at the state and national levels. Applications and rules are posted on the department website.

Encourage eligible students to apply – applications are due by March 1!

Questions? Please contact Diane Weggen at dsweggen@gmail.com or 715-644-2668.

NEW DONATION FORM!

The Poppy Fund Suggested Donation form was updated January 1, 2024.

Fairchild Hall at Union Grove is a Veteran housing and recovery center contracted by Lutheran Social Services. Since it is not managed by Union Grove Veterans Home, donations designated to Union Grove cannot be used to support Fairchild Hall. There is a new separate line item for Fairchild Hall.

Please use the new form posted on the department website for any donations submitted in the future.

MEMBERSHIP

2024 Membership Totals (as of 1/24/24) – 74.91%

DIST.	GOAL %	MUSHER
5	83.13%	Little Girl
12	82.53%	Baby Girl
6	79.03%	Denali
3	78.33%	Ranger
9	76.65%	Percy
2	76.65%	Sloane
4	76.00%	Winkle
8	75.89%	Isabella
7	75.66%	Hero
10	74.21%	Balto
1	73.54%	Diamond
11	67.35%	D.O.G.



POPPIES

Thank you to everyone who submitted poppy orders by December 15. Poppies are sold out but current orders will be filled in the order received.

New orders will not be accepted until August 2024.



AMERICANISM

Diane Burkhalter
Department Chairman
burkhalterdl@gmail.com
262-284-6873 / 414-807-0501

What a wonderful and exciting way we get to put the words of our Preamble into action...“to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism.” Now that the rush of the holidays has passed, this is a great time to involve your community’s children and youth in the Americanism Essay Contest.

We all recognize that our schools have heavy demands on their time, therefore, being excited about this writing opportunity and sharing the relevance to the numerous standards at the various grade levels when meeting with the teachers and administrators can be very helpful in gaining their schools’ participation. Also helpful is the rubric developed by the Americanism committee. This type of tool has been utilized by schools for decades and is very familiar to both students and teachers K-12 when evaluating student work on the various standards across the content areas.

When meeting with educators to introduce this contest, please share both the submission form and the rubric. This will be helpful for teachers and the writers as they compose their written responses. The committee also felt the rubric would be a useful aid for the units when evaluating the submissions. Please remember

that there are a variety of ways we can reach our children and youth – clubs, youth groups, libraries, neighbors, etc. If you have any questions or if I can assist you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

There are other ways we can put the words of our Preamble into action. The American Legion Auxiliary has offered a plethora of ideas in the “Star-Spangled Kids” and this year we have been given materials provided by the American Legion’s Child Welfare Foundation to help us in providing fun and exciting events that promote patriotism and educate our youth about our Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the freedoms unique to our country. Work together with your Legion Families to create family events utilizing these materials. These events can be planned for any time throughout the year; however, April is The American Legion’s Children and Youth Month. Be creative in the various activities you provide and the sky’s the limit – have scavenger hunts that focus on facts about our Constitution, history, etc.; provide patriotic arts and crafts; have patriotic trivia games. The list is endless.

A wonderful way for us to interact with our high school youth is the oratorical competition. Check when your District competition is scheduled. If you missed that, the State date is March 23 in Ripon. You will be amazed not only by the knowledge these students share, but their composure during their presentations.

LEADERSHIP

Joyce Endres
Department Chairman
ljendres@charter.net
608-772-1763
Committee: Teresa Isensee and Linda Coppock

“What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.” Jane Goodall

UNIT MEMBER OF THE YEAR recognizes members serving at the unit level who exemplify the values and ideals of the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA).

Do you have a unit member that stands out? One who makes a significant impact on the accomplishments of the unit, consistently exemplifies ALA values and ideas, regularly participates or volunteers with enthusiasm, steps up to serve on a unit committee, keeps a positive attitude, is a team player, welcomes new/returning members, or shares their excitement about the ALA and unit activities?

Consider nominating a unit member as the 2024 Unit Member of the Year (UMOTY). The UMOTY application is posted on the department website (www.amlegionauxwi.org), under Programs, Leadership. The Wisconsin UMOTY is recognized annually at the ALA department and national conventions.

Requirements:

1. Open to senior members in good standing who are not in an elected or appointed leadership role higher than unit president.
2. Accomplishments and activities must be achieved during the 2023-2024 ALA year.
3. Units must submit a WI UMOTY application to Joyce Endres, Dept Leadership

Chairman, ljendres@charter.net by April 15 (*do not send application to national*).

POSITIVE IMPACT: To make decisions, we need to listen to stakeholders. **Who are ALA stakeholders?** Stakeholders are people we impact as a member of the ALA and its family. The ALA Preamble to the Constitution and our mission statement help identify ALA stakeholders, including: ALA members; The American Legion, Sons, and Riders; Veterans, military and their families; citizens (including your community); and youth. Remember, you the member and your unit are the foundation of the ALA.

As a leader or a member, listen more and ask questions about interests/passion to interact with your stakeholders. Reach out often. Breathe in their wisdom and insights. Based on input received, assess the input with unit members, leaders and program chairman to consider what to add, eliminate, improve or update to unit meetings, programs or events to better meet current stakeholder needs. Plan next steps to determine what, when and how to implement proposed changes.

VOLUNTEER SMARTER, NOT HARDER. When you recruit a new member, ask them why they joined and how they want to be involved. Consider completing an ‘Event After Action Report’ to define what went well and what needs improvement to help decide if you hold this event again. Provide honest input with potential solutions to ensure the impact you make creates a positive impact, engages members and creates excitement so all may enjoy the ALA experience.

“Be the leader you wish you had.” Simon Sinek. Thank you for all you do for God and Country.

EDUCATION

Diane Weggen
Department Chairman
dsweggen@gmail.com
715-644-2668

There are many American Legion Auxiliary and American Legion scholarships available. Community service hours may be required.

- Children of Warriors National President’s Scholarship (15 @ \$5,000)
- Spirit of Youth Scholarship (5 @ \$5,000 and 47 @ \$1,000) *
- Junior Member Loyalty Scholarship (10 @ \$2,500)
- Non-Traditional Student Scholarship (5 @ \$2,000) **
- The James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship (Veteran Affairs Volunteer Services (VAVS) Student Volunteer; the dollar amount and number given varies)
- Samsung American Legion Scholarship (for ALA Badger Girls & Badger Boys participants)
- Wisconsin ALA scholarships (check list and eligibility at amlegionauxwi.org)
- Local ALA Unit scholarships

* The **Spirit of Youth** scholarship fund has separate scholarship opportunities: Spirit of Youth Scholarship for Junior members, Junior Members of the Year, and participants in the American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation program. “To reward our Junior ALA members who are actively participating in the ALA’s mission, the Junior Member of the Year (JMOY) program has expanded to

- One overall national JMOY will win a \$5,000 scholarship, as well as a trip to the ALA’s National Convention.
- Four division JMOY winners will receive

a \$1,000 scholarship.

- Juniors must be at least in eighth grade or eighth grade equivalent and may win only once.”

The **Non-Traditional Student scholarship eligibility has expanded to include ALA, TAL, and SAL members who are non-traditional students; Veterans who served in the United States Armed Forces and were honorably discharged; and spouses of active-duty servicemembers or Veterans who were honorably discharged. Applicants may be pursuing training in a certified, trade, professional, or technical program, or a two-year or four-year degree program. Non-Traditional Student is defined as a student who is one semester or more out of school.

The Spirit of Youth and Non-Traditional scholarship applications are both online. Applications will be submitted to ALA National Headquarters then routed to the appropriate department (state) for the first round of judging. **Applications must be submitted no later than 10:59 pm on March 1, 2024, unless otherwise indicated.**

Wisconsin American Legion Auxiliary Scholarships: Eligibility requirements as stated in the eligibility section apply to all scholarships. Please read applications carefully. For more information on these scholarships or to apply, visit www.amlegionauxwi.org (click on Programs, then Education). There is a list of scholarships with eligibility requirements students can apply for plus **M. Louise Wilson Educational Loan Fund** information. This fund provides interest-free loans to assist female ALA members in need of financial assistance to further their education goals. Please take the opportunity to donate to this fund.

CHRISTMAS GIFT SHOP

Diana Sirovina
Department Chairman
dsirovina@icloud.com
414-881-9581

Christmas celebrations traditionally include giving gifts to family members and friends. But for our Veterans in long-term care facilities, this is something that likely does not happen. A good number of Veterans in long-term care facilities are not able to go out shopping and many times lack the resources to purchase gifts. This is why our Christmas Gift Shop program is so important. Through the generous support of our members all over the state, Christmas Gift Shop is able to provide the means for these Veterans to give a gift to their loved ones.

For us, Christmas Gift Shop is an annual event that we look forward to with great enthusiasm. We know that no matter how much time and effort goes into the program, the amount of joy that it brings to our Veterans and their families is well worth it. As we moved through the process of scheduling dates for taking orders, selecting just the right gifts to offer, placing orders and receiving the items, and ultimately wrapping them for shipment, our volunteers are always mindful of the impact this program has for these very special Veterans.

Each year we receive letters and notes from family members expressing their thanks not

only for the gifts they receive, but to our organization for making this program available to their Veteran in the care facility. Many tell us the gifts were very unexpected, others say receiving the gifts bring back wonderful memories of times when their families were all together for the holiday.

This year our Christmas Gift Shop program, once again, was very successful. As we visited with the Veterans when we helped them select their gifts, we could tell by the smiles on their faces that this program meant so much to them. Some shared stories about their loved ones, while others were just happy to have someone visit with them for a little while. Without a doubt, the program made a difference for these Veterans and their families.

As we conclude the Christmas Gift Shop program for the year, it is important that we acknowledge the tremendous financial support the program receives from our units. Without that generosity, the program and its impact would not be possible. Even though we only work on this program for a short time each year, units are encouraged to continue their support of this important program whenever they have funds available. Your donations are vital to ensuring that this great program will always be available to our Veterans in long-term care facilities and their families.

THANK YOU!

To the wonderful members
in the Department of Wisconsin,

Thank you for your most generous donations to the ALA Foundation. As the Mission Endowment grows, the ALA can continue to support Veterans, and promote education and good citizenship. Veterans Creative Arts gives Veterans the opportunity to display and continue to develop their artistic talents, and to make connections with other Veterans. Thank you for your support.

*Diane Duscheck
Vice President ALA Foundation*

WANTED:

**ALA Department
Finance Committee Member**

Department Bylaws allow any American Legion Auxiliary member with appropriate experience to serve on the Department Finance Committee. **Candidates need to have experience in accounting, finance, budgeting, auditing or other relevant background to be considered.**

Candidates should submit a resume to deptsec@amlegionauxwi.org by **April 12, 2024**.

Upon receipt of all resumes, candidates will be contacted by the Department Senior Vice President for a telephone interview. The successful candidate will be appointed to serve a 3-year term (July 2024-July 2027).



HELP WANTED!

**ALA Badger Girls State Counselors,
Staff and Nurses are still needed!**
Friday, June 14 – Friday, June 21
UW-Oshkosh Campus

You can volunteer the whole week
or just a couple days.

Please review the opportunities
available and submit an application
(www.ALABGS.org >
About ALABGS >
ALABGS Volunteer Info)

or contact ALABGS Chairman
Danyelle Thompson
for more information
at alabgs.chairman@gmail.com

IRON MOUNTAIN VA: OFFICIAL VISIT



The Wisconsin American Legion Family leaders visited the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Facility in Iron Mountain, Michigan to meet with Director John Shealey to discuss the current status of the facility and plans for improvement.

VA facilities rely on volunteers to fulfill many of the in-patient and out-patient needs, relieving some of the workload from hospital staff. Iron Mountain Associate Representative Ann Wender and Associate Deputy Barb Van Bostel, members of ALA Unit 66 of Athelstane/Silvercliff, represent ALA-Wisconsin.

Pictured (l-r): Iron Mountain Director of Volunteer Services Katie Maxon, Barb Van Bostel, Ann Wender, President Maggie Geiger, and VA&R Chairman Bonnie Jakubczyk.

December 2023 Daily Sweepstakes Winners

1	\$15	Richard Manthey	Pardeeville
2	\$15	Linda Ogarek	Plainfield IL
3	\$25	Joanne Rhode	Oconto
4	\$15	Janan Halvorsen	Wisconsin Dells
5	\$15	Sheila Heiser	Rib Lake
6	\$15	Marilyn Finke	Mayville
7	\$15	Luanne Yanko	Rib Lake
8	\$15	Kathleen Decker	Waupun
9	\$15	Karen Klunck	Sheboygan
10	\$25	Joann Ratajczyk	Pound
11	\$15	Mary Lavin	Medford
12	\$15	Mary Hampton	Spring Valley
13	\$500	Jo Volla	Cambridge
14	\$15	Heather Koth	Wisconsin Rapids
15	\$15	Jane Bates	Gordonville TX
16	\$15	Ginger Groshek	Stevens Point
17	\$25	Jerri Prem	Plain
18	\$15	Kathy Rudser	West Salem
19	\$15	Rosemary Weiland	Port Washington
20	\$15	Gretchen Last	Juneau
21	\$15	Cash Stewart	Arlington
22	\$15	Charleen Barutha	Kewaskum
23	\$15	Cheryl La Rose	Eau Claire
24	\$25	Carol Lee	Thorp
25	\$15	Jean Young	Oconto
26	\$15	Gary Krueger	Waterloo
27	\$15	Lois Trad	Greenleaf
28	\$15	Yvonne Friday	Weyauwega
29	\$15	Peter Nagel	West Allis
30	\$15	Arlene Platts	Kenosha
31	\$25	Bill Rice	Waupun

November 2023 Daily Sweepstakes Winners

1	\$15	Sharon Nachtwey	Black Creek
2	\$15	Dawn Tubbesing	Prescott
3	\$15	Harold Berberich	Onalaska
4	\$15	Rachel Larson	Webster
5	\$25	Judy Hacker	Chilton
6	\$15	Sharon Getzie	Baldwin
7	\$15	Sandra Waters	Butler
8	\$15	Ivy Yttri	Fort Mill SC
9	\$15	Carol Graveen	Minocqua
10	\$500	Judy Crooks	Monticello
11	\$15	Christine Wilczek	Lublin
12	\$25	Shawna Henseler	Brillion
13	\$15	Joyce Hayes	Green Lake
14	\$15	Ciara Doremus	Oxford
15	\$15	Carol Leiterman	Green Bay
16	\$15	Shirley Stachowiak	Franklin
17	\$15	Penny Ciszewski	Oconomowoc
18	\$15	Sharen Hammes	Bangor
19	\$25	Junalee Hogenson	Glenwood City
20	\$15	Amanda Szalewski	Wausau
21	\$15	Ann Chipman	Neenah
22	\$15	Dorothy Greening	Menasha
23	\$15	Mary Samuelson	Hudson
24	\$15	Sarah Titus	Mequon
25	\$15	Patti Mareo	Milwaukee
26	\$25	Kathy Doyle	Belmont
27	\$15	Beverly Rose	Oshkosh
28	\$15	Ione DeSmith	Glenwood City
29	\$15	Jada Grimsled	Viroqua
30	\$15	Mary Seibel	Wild Rose

HONORING VETERANS IN JUNEAU COUNTY



Members of Earl Gulligan Unit 133 from Camp Douglas sponsored a Wreaths Across America project. Fundraisers and donations from area businesses and individuals made the project possible. The Camp Douglas Legion Family worked with many volunteers to place approximately 380 wreaths on Veterans' graves in Camp Douglas, St. James Catholic Church, Hustler, Trinity Lutheran Church, and Fountain Lutheran Church cemeteries.

HONORING VETERANS WITH QUILTS

AT RIGHT: The Giving Bees, a homemakers' group in the Seymour/Black Creek area, have supported many projects of ALA Unit 106 in Seymour over the decades with their handicraft skills. Some Auxiliary members also belong to the Giving Bees. Patriotic quilts and pillows were presented to local women Veterans. Veterans (back row): Marcie Jefferson, Sharon Dunville, Ann Smith, Elaine Fitzpatrick, April Hauser, Barbara Rettman. Unable to attend: Joan Lontkowski and Linda Krause. The Giving Bees (front row): Kathy Schroeder, Lois Schwitzer, Linda Biese. Not Pictured: Lois Dahlke.

BELOW: Judy Jones, President of Deneen-McCabe Unit 432 in Hammond, presented a Quilt of Valor made by members of the Auxiliary Unit to WWII Veteran Duane Johnson.





Karl Stuvengen
Department
Commander

★★★★ DEPARTMENT COMMANDER ★★★★★

Over the last couple of months, your Department leadership has been visiting the USDVA Medical Centers and WDVA Veterans Homes in Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota. In my opinion, things are going well within the system serving our Veterans. While the VA overall still struggles with meeting some of its missions, the hospitals and clinics in our area are still some of the best the system has to offer. I can report that all USDVA facilities are continuing to expand and fine-tune healthcare to women Veterans. All facilities are expanding community outreach, and working to engage with other providers in their areas to ensure availability of services that our Veterans need, regardless of what those services are or who provides them.

The WDVA Veterans Homes in Chippewa Falls, King and Union Grove are all remarkable facilities, striving to provide the best living environment for Wisconsin Veterans. These facilities offer a wide variety of services and amenities to their residents. All have improved independent living arrangements, to offer a much more home-like atmosphere for Veterans who don't require higher levels of care.

There are a couple of areas of concern we need to address with our elected representatives. Administrators related the effects of financial constraints that prevent them from recruiting and maintaining the very best providers. Another is

the limits on spending that do not require extra bureaucratic processes. Bidding and higher-level approval are stuck in the 1990s and the costs of goods and services have risen dramatically in the last few years. This makes it difficult to keep projects on schedule, adding months to the completion timeline. While everyone understands the need for financial oversight, the processes providing that oversight need to keep up with reality and not add unnecessary burdens that directly affect the services that can be offered to our Veterans. I ask that you explore these issues and urge our legislators to do the right thing for Wisconsin's Veterans.

There is one more topic I'd like to address. This is a situation where Veterans can not only help the VA, but also help themselves. There is still a persistent problem with Veterans not enrolling in the VA system. In comparing the estimated total Veteran population to the number of Veterans enrolled, only about one third of that population have signed up with the system. In Wisconsin, of the estimated 317,000 Veterans, only about 104,000 have registered. Whether a Veteran now needs VA healthcare or not is irrelevant. This lack of enrollment will eventually lead to Congress reducing funding to the VA, based on the perceived lack of need. The day will come where almost all Veterans will need something from the VA, and if we don't let our representatives know we are out here, those services will not be available in the future. If you haven't registered, contact our Department Service Office or your County Veterans Service Officer for help.



Maggie Geiger
Department
President

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

During the months of November and December I was invited to visit eight VA facilities in Wisconsin, Iron Mountain, and Minneapolis with Commander Karl. To walk through the facilities was amazing. I had only visited Zablocki Memorial VA in Milwaukee. It was wonderful to see that our Veterans are being treated respectfully by those around them and the latest medical treatments available at all the facilities. Nursing home and memory care units to those in need are just a few services to help make their lives better.

Our ALA units throughout the state supply so many items to make the lives of those at each facility better! Meeting the ALA representatives and deputies at each facility, listening to them talk about units and its members, always reaching out to make sure Veterans at each facility have what they need, whether it is a blanket, teddy bears, heart pillows, tray favors, articles of clothing, hygiene products or any number of items, brought tears to my eyes. I felt so proud of all of you. I wish all of you would have the opportunity to see what is possible when we stay mission focused – it is mission in action!

Sitting down and visiting with each facility's director, asking them what they need to improve services, and how the Legion Family can assist was very informative. Several of the facilities are in the process of building or renovating their buildings to have clinics, mammograms and other services specifically for women Veterans. Women Veterans are the fastest growing group of Veterans using the VA system.

One overriding concern at the facilities is the lack of Veterans enrolling in the VA Health Care System. The concern is what congress will do if Veteran enrollments continue to decline. Does a lack of enrollment equate to a reduction in funding to our VA facilities?

There are qualification requirements that your County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) can explain and possibly help you through. Contact your CVSO at 1-844-WIS-CVSO (844-947-2876) or <https://wicvso.org/locate-your-cvso/>. You may also call Wisconsin American Legion Service Officer James Fialkowski at 414-902-5722, or go to <https://www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply/> to learn how to apply.

Even if you applied in the past and were not eligible, please consider contacting your CVSO. Circumstances and qualifications may have changed – it's only a phone call and a few minutes of your time!



Allen Watry
SAL Detachment
Commander

★★★★ SAL DETACHMENT COMMANDER ★★★★★

Hello Wisconsin Legion Family, As I am writing this article I am also preparing for our yearly Midwinter Conference. Midwinter is not only a great opportunity for Training and Celebration, it is also the halfway mark for our business year. So this feels like a great time to reflect on the last six months and provide a couple reminders for the next six months.

With respect to Membership, the Detachment is doing very well. As of January 11:

- The Detachment of Wisconsin is ranked fourth in the Nation at 86.7% of our 2024 Membership Goal (3,814 paid members with a goal of 4,398)
- We have 557 more paid members for 2024 than we did at this same time last year for 2023.
- Of the 3,814 paid members for 2024
 - 376 are new members
 - 3,438 are renewals

But we still have some work to do. At this time 11 of our 122 Squadrons are under 20%. Please make sure Memberships are submitting memberships as they are received. And go get those renewals and new members!

As you may recall, the theme for the year is "Connected to Be the One". This focuses on:

- Being connected and working together as a Legion Family
- Being connected to and making a positive impact in our communities.

Over the last six months many people have shared all they are doing to live out this theme. Please keep up all the great work! Continue to work as a Legion Family promoting and living out our Four Pillars in our Communities. We are making a difference in our communities, especially for our Veterans, Active Military, and Youth.

Looking ahead to the next six months:

- Keep working on Memberships through Buddy Checks and being involved in your Communities.
- Start to plan your Spring Elections. Once completed, please submit a Squadron Information Form. This ensures the Detachment has the latest/greatest contact information for your Squadron.
- Start to prepare your Yearly Consolidated Report Form. The 2023-2024 Form has been uploaded to the Detachment website. It is never too early to start to collect the data for this document, which is due May 31, 2024.

Thank you for all you are doing. Keep up the great work; lets have another successful six months!

For God and Country.



Corey Doehrmann
State Director
American Legion
Riders Association

★★★★ LEGION RIDERS ★★★★★

If you didn't attend the 2024 American Legion Midwinter, you missed out on some great training and camaraderie. I encourage you to plan on attending next year in January. Also, at Midwinter there were many committee meetings. The Legion Riders are a program that falls under the Americanism Committee, and I reported on our activity from May to October of 2023. Our impact

to the four pillars is as follows: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation 3,738 volunteer hours and \$30,233 in donations, National Security 215 volunteer hours and \$9,814 in donations, Americanism 3,795 volunteer hours and \$1,175 in donations, Children and Youth 100 volunteer hours and \$3,500 in donations. This makes for a grand total of 7,848 volunteer hours and \$44,722 in donations. I'll put some context on that by stating that we only had half the districts reporting their work. We have over 700

members across 203 posts in all 12 districts. If you are reading this and you're a Legion Rider, please ensure you are reporting your volunteer work to your district leadership.

The Legion Rider year is just getting started as most districts are in the middle of planning their activities for the year. Now is the time to get involved with them or get them involved with your activity. The planning for the WI Legion Riders - Cruise for a Cause, 'Stu's Cruise-24' is progressing. We will be sending out a mailing to host posts in the next week, this will give them more information for planning and keep the lines of communication open. Plan is to have the website up around March 1 with registration soon after.

If you have any questions about the Wisconsin Legion Riders, don't hesitate to contact me: Corey Doehrmann/State Director, cell 262-305-0305 or email at alrawi.director@gmail.com. Our next meeting after this publication will be May 4 at Post 54 in Marshfield, WI.

SAVE THE DATE
LEGION FAMILY TESTIMONIAL



MAY | 18TH | 2024

LA SURE'S BANQUET & CATERING
3125 S. WASHBURN ST., OSHKOSH, WI 54904