

## MEMBERSHIP

### LET'S TALK HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Honorary Life Membership (HLM) is a way for units to honor members who have given outstanding service to your American Legion Auxiliary unit. HLMs are paid by the unit and the members are often elderly or nursing home bound. Your unit sets the parameters. It could be any member aged 85 or older; it could be any member who lives in a nursing home. HLMs may have been very active members before their health or age prevented them from attending meetings or working the programs. HLMs are not transferable between units, nor do they receive membership renewal notices. The unit is responsible for paying the dues annually for HLMs.

How can your unit raise money to pay for these memberships? Set aside a percentage of your earnings from your fundraisers to pay for HLMs or host a fundraiser to raise money strictly for HLM memberships. Maybe have your juniors host a bake sale where the funds are used to pay for these memberships.

It is a kind and beautiful way to honor members who have given so much to your unit in the past.

### Wisconsin Membership

As of January 21, 2026, Central Division is in first place in membership. Wisconsin holds second place within the Division, and

### DEPARTMENT MEMBERSHIP TEAM

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**Membership Totals**  
- 82.71%  
(as of 1/28/2026)

District	Goal %
4	91.49%
11	89.14%
3	87.12%
6	86.22%
2	85.08%
9	83.72%
12	83.33%
7	81.51%
10	80.58%
1	80.49%
8	79.38%
5	66.18%

is in seventh place in the nation with 12,903 paid members and a goal of 15,860 (81.36%). Iowa is leading Central Division at 82.85%. Wisconsin is in fourth place for retention at 79.83% with 386 new members.

Reach out to your members with a personal phone call if they have not yet renewed for the 2026 membership year. Let's get Wisconsin to 85% in the next few weeks!

## 2025 CHRISTMAS GIFT SHOP: IT'S A WRAP!



Department President Sue Hembrook, National President Pam Ray, Christmas Gift Shop Supervisor Diana Sirovina.

### Diana Sirovina Gift Shop Supervisor

As the beautiful Irving Berlin song says, "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas." Such a beautiful, memorable song, my all-time favorite! A white Christmas is something many people actually enjoy. Unfortunately, it is not something we look forward to for Christmas Gift Shop wrapping day!

Wrapping day brings together a group of very dedicated members to take on the task of wrapping the numerous gifts our veterans in long-term care facilities selected for their loved ones. This year's wrapping day had its fair share of interesting things happening. First, there was the date change from Sunday to Monday, due to scheduling conflicts. Next, there was the snow! That beautiful, idyllic, fluffy gift from Mother Nature proved to create a challenge for those talented people who drove many miles to participate.

As is typical of our dedicated members, twelve inches of snow did not deter them from creating another memorable wrapping day! We were privileged to host a special guest this year. National President Pam Ray managed to navigate her way from Illinois with her husband, SAL Past National Vice Commander Earl Ray. Pam helped us wrap the nearly 600 gifts and had a great time doing it.

Although the end of the program this year didn't necessarily go according to plan, 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 means so much to them.



### National President Pam Ray.

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 holidays.

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 members. Without that generosity, the program and its impact would not be possible. Thank you for your continuing support of this great program!



## The American Legion Family 2026 TESTIMONIAL DINNER

**SATURDAY APRIL 11, 2026**

STRAWBERRY CREEK  
14810 72nd St.  
Kenosha, WI 53142

Please check The American Legion  
or Auxiliary websites for details coming soon!!!

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

**Sandy Mack**  
Department Chaplain/Music Chairman  
Smack0555@gmail.com  
262-388-9816

When you call the meeting to order, what is the first item on your agenda? *It should be your prayer then the Pledge of Allegiance. Why? Because it is God before Country.*

Do you include music in your meetings? You do not have to be a great singer, usually it only takes one person to start, and the rest will follow. It is also an effective way to involve more people in the program and add some FUN! You can switch the songs up. Here are a few suggestions: The Star-Spangled Banner, America the Beautiful, and God Bless America. For something a little more modern, include Born in the U.S.A. by Bruce Springsteen or God Bless the U.S.A. by Lee Greenwood.

**“God Bless the U.S.A.”**  
by Lee Greenwood:

If tomorrow all the things were gone I worked for all my life  
And I had to start again with just my children and my wife.  
I thank my lucky stars to be living here today  
‘Cause the flag still stands for freedom and they can’t take that away.

And I’m proud to be an American where at least I know I’m free.  
And I won’t forget the men who died who gave that right to me.  
And I’d gladly stand up next to you and defend Her still today  
‘Cause there ain’t no doubt I love this land. God Bless the U.S.A.

Let us Pray.  
Lord, teach us to be generous with what we have, help us to give with a joyful heart and to trust that You will provide for us in return. May our generosity reflect Your love and grace. Amen.

**Special Request:**  
Please help me make an incredibly special Prayer Book for President Sue Hembrook by sending me prayers, poems, and inspirational pieces. They can be original or from another source; something that touches or inspires you. Please identify the author, person sending and their Unit and District. They can be sent to me by email **smack0555@gmail.com** or mail to Sandy Mack, 1204 Wisconsin St, Adell, WI 53001.

**Sweepstakes winners are posted at**

**amlegionauxwi.org**  
under the **"More"** tab.



GREETINGS FROM HEADQUARTERS

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

The 2026 Midwinter Conference was very successful! Over 520 Legion Family members registered to attend, including more than 130 Auxiliary members! This is the highest attendance since COVID. Auxiliary members had the opportunity to attend: 1) a joint session with the Legion, SAL, ALA, and Legion Riders on how to work better together; 2) a joint session on how to improve Public Relations for the Local Legion Family; and 3) an ALA session on the new online annual report process. A parade of checks was held that raised more than \$2,400 to support our VA hospitals and Veterans Homes. Thank you to everyone who participated!

The national organization mailed final dues renewal notices by 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. If you have not renewed yet, you can be immediately reinstated by paying the national organization with a credit card (317-569-4570 or www.ALAforVeterans.org). As a reminder, if your membership has lapsed, you must pay 2026 dues before you can pay prior back dues.

Members should be proud of all they accomplished and report it to their Unit President by April 1st. Unit presidents will consolidate the information and submit Unit Year-End Reports by April 15. Unit Impact reports must be submitted to the district presidents. Program reports may be submitted online to the Department Chairmen via the department website – saving on printing and postage.



UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES:

Events

March-April	District Spring Conferences (check with District President for details)
April 11	Legion Family Testimonial (Strawberry Creek Club, Kenosha)
April 11-12	ALA State Bowling Tournament (Weston, WI)
April 25	Legion Family Day
May 15-17	Junior Spring Conference (at Camp American Legion)
June 21-26	ALA Badger Girls State (UW-Oshkosh)
July 16-19	Department Convention (Hilton Paper Valley, Appleton)
Aug 28-Sep 3	National Convention (Louisville, Kentucky)

Deadlines

March 1	2026-2027 Department Committee Applications
March 1	Scholarship Applications
March 15	ALA State Bowling Tournament Entry Forms
April 1	Online ALA Badger Girls State Registrations for Delegates and Alternates
April 15	Unit Year-End Impact and Program Reports
May 1	Unit Member of the Year Nominations to Leadership Chairman
May 15	Mentor of the Year Nominations to PPP Chairman
June 1	Online Salute to Servicemembers Nominations to NHQ
June 1	Department Resolutions
June 1	District Nominations for Alternates to National Convention

EDUCATION

**Delores Woolf**  
Department Chairman  
deloreswoolf@gmail.com  
608-348-7403

New Year’s greetings to all ALA units in Wisconsin. Following our summer and fall activities in communicating with local school needs and promoting scholarships at the local, department and national levels of the ALA, it is time to continue working our Education program. Look ahead to the March 1, 2026 deadline for the national scholarships: Children of Warriors, Spirit of Youth, Non-Traditional Student, and Member Loyalty. These scholarships have online applications with information for eligibility requirements, completion details, and how to submit the applications to the national organization.

Department scholarship applications are online with a pdf to download, complete and submit to the local ALA unit for the president or secretary to sign. These are due from students to the unit by March 1, 2026 and to the Department Education Chairman by March 15, 2026. The turnaround time is quick so it is best to get it done earlier. Have applicants read directions carefully and if they have questions, please feel free to contact me. All of these

applications are available at [www.amlegionauxwi.org/education-mlw](http://www.amlegionauxwi.org/education-mlw). The beauty of the department scholarship form is that the applicant completes the personal information page and indicates which scholarship opportunities apply to them.

The M. Louise Wilson Loan Fund application is online as well. This is an interest-free loan for students who are ALA members and requires a co-signer. The loan is paid back in workable installments after graduation or if the student leaves school. Thank you to all units who have made monetary donations to the M. Louise Wilson Loan Fund.

Units should download the Give 10 to Education suggested donation and track monies and materials given for their Education program. This includes unit scholarships and other activities that support education in the community. Be sure to partner with community organizations, encourage word of mouth referrals, use social media platforms, and advertise in local media (tv, radio, newspaper).

Other important times for the Education program are Purple Up! Day for military children on April 15, 2026 and Teacher Appreciation Week from May 4-8, 2026. Above all, complete your annual reports on time so information can be incorporated in the department reports. Let’s all be part of the village to raise the child by promoting our ALA programs.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

**Lynda Tryczak**  
Department Chairman  
tryczak.l@gmail.com  
715-212-7515

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!** At this time of year everyone is setting goals for the start of the new year. What about setting a goal for your unit? One idea is to participate and sign up for the **AMERICAN LEGION USA 250 CHALLENGE**.

This challenge provides several opportunities in Physical Fitness, Wellness and, of course, **COMMUNITY SERVICE**. Here are some ideas that your unit can participate in:

- Gather 250 food donations for a food pantry.
- Provide 250 clothing items to a homeless shelter.
- Write 250 cards to nursing home residents.

To register for the challenge, visit <https://www.legion.org/get-involved/community-programs/usa250/challenge>. You can also register as an individual which doubles the impact.

Here’s to a successful new year working Community Service.



## JUNIOR ACTIVITIES

**Christine Johnsen**  
**Department Chairman**  
**cmj102@aol.com**  
**715-203-2015**

**Morgan Johnsen**  
**Vice-Chairman**

Thank you to everyone who supported the Juniors at the Midwinter Conference by purchasing KwikTrip cards and honor buttons! Your support is greatly appreciated as we work toward our goal of purchasing four kayaks for Camp American Legion. You can continue to purchase Kwik Trip cards and personalized honor buttons through the form or Zeffy link available on the Junior Activities program page on the department website.

Once again, we will hold our **Department of Wisconsin Junior Activities Spring Conference at Camp American Legion!** It will be held on the weekend of May 15-17, 2026. Hopefully it will be a little warmer and drier this year so we can do more outdoor activities. The official business meeting will be on Saturday, May 15, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm in the main lodge. This will include the business meeting, election and installation of Honorary Department Junior officers, lunch, and a Camp

American Legion service activity.

We can also stay overnight at Camp for the weekend! All campers will sleep indoors in a cabin or the main lodge. The weather will determine our activities, but we anticipate several veteran service projects and Patch activities during the day and campfires at night. You can choose to stay one or both nights or only attend the Saturday business meeting. Please indicate these details on the registration form. Overnight campers should arrive no earlier than 5:00 pm on Friday, May 15, and everyone must depart Camp by 12:00 noon on Sunday, May 17. Registration for the conference and lunch on Saturday is \$10. There is an additional \$5 per night fee to help defray the cost of meals/snacks for those staying overnight. Meals will be served from the evening meal on Friday through breakfast on Sunday.

Registration forms must be received by **April 15, 2026**. Additional information, including what to bring, will be sent to all registrants by email, and will be available on the ALA Wisconsin website at <https://www.amlegionauxwi.org/junioractivities>, in May. As we work to Honor and Support Our Veterans, we look forward to seeing many Juniors at the Department of Wisconsin Junior Activities Spring Conference!

# AMERICANISM

**Deanna Farley**  
**Department Chairman**  
**farleyofsc@gmail.com**  
**920-810-2664**

The purpose of the Americanism program is to promote patriotism and responsible citizenship. We all should make ourselves and our community knowledgeable on flag history, etiquette, and proper disposal methods. We need to visibly practice and promote the observation of patriotic holidays so your community will look to our organization for information.

Respecting our American flag is an activity that has been taught to us for many years. The proper promotion of our flag may be difficult if there are no activities in place. You can distribute ***Proper Flag Etiquette*** pamphlets or have them available in strategic places in your community. If possible, have a specific location in your community to have American flags available to purchase. If allowable, have a sign on their bulletin board with details of the cost of a flag, how to properly attach flag to a pole, building, etc. If possible, advertise in your local media the availability of where flags can be purchased. This may involve some follow-up or long-term involvement to keep the program in place. Ask your Americanism committee to volunteer to help with this project. An important part of Americanism is promoting our flag!

A large part of our ALA Americanism Program is the Americanism Essay Contest. This year's topic is "Celebrating America's 250th Birthday and the Veterans who Fought for Our Freedom." The information for the essay contest should have been distributed to your local schools already. On the Department of Wisconsin website, go to the Americanism Program. There are three bullet points about the essay contest. The first bullet point has all of the information you need, including the cover sheet which must accompany each essay contest entry. Each unit's winning essays must be submitted to me by March 15, 2026. My mailing address is listed on the submission form.

There is a wealth of information available on Americanism on both the ALA Department of Wisconsin website and the ALA National website. For answers to specific questions, you may email national staff at **[americanism@alaforveterans.org](mailto:americanism@alaforveterans.org)**.

## 2026 DEPARTMENT CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS

**DUE JUNE 1, 2026**

Resolutions presented by an individual member must be approved by the unit or district to which the member belongs and submitted to Department by June 1. See Department Bylaws, Article II, Section 1(d) for details.

## WANTED:

**ALA Department  
Finance Committee Member**

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

Resumes are due to  
**deptsec@amlegionauxwi.org**  
by **April 10, 2026**.

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 2026-July 2029).



**DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN  
SPRING JUNIOR CONFERENCE**

**Camp American Legion**  
8529 County D  
Lake Tomahawk, WI 54539



**Friday, May 15, 2026, 5:00 pm – Sunday, May 17, 2026, 12:00 noon**

The 2026 Junior Spring Conference main event will be held on Saturday, May 16, 2026, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm at Camp American Legion. This will include the business meeting, election and installation of Honorary Department Junior Officers, lunch, and a Camp American Legion service activity.

As we work in the spirit to *Honor and Support Our Veterans*, we also have the opportunity to stay overnight at Camp for the weekend, to participate in additional veteran service projects, Patch projects, games, campfires, and so much more!

Registration for the conference and lunch on Saturday is \$10. There is an additional \$5 per night fee to help defray the cost of meals/snacks for those staying overnight. Meals will be served from the evening meal on Friday through breakfast on Sunday. Additional information will be sent by email to registrants in early May and will be available on the ALA Wisconsin website at [www.amlegionauxwi.org/unioractivities](http://www.amlegionauxwi.org/unioractivities).

Please call/text Christine Johnsen at 715-203-2015, or email at [cmj102@aol.com](mailto:cmj102@aol.com), with any questions.

## 2026 JUNIOR AUXILIARY SPRING CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Registration must be received by **Wednesday, April 15, 2026.**

Form submitted by (please print clearly):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ District #: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit #: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: (      )      Email: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME / UNIT #	Grade	First time attendee? (Yes/No)	Junior Member	Senior Member	Overnight Friday (Yes/No) (\$5)	Attending Saturday Meeting Only (Yes/No) (\$10)	Overnight Saturday (Yes/No) (\$5)	Total for Registration & Meals
Totals								\$

Total Amount Enclosed \$

Please send registration form with check payable to American Legion Auxiliary to:  
Christine Johnsen, 159991 Granite Rd., Wausau, WI 54403

# Scholarship Applications

**DUE: MARCH 1, 2026**

The American Legion Auxiliary offers more than \$25,000 in scholarships at the state and national levels. Encourage eligible students to apply **by March 1!** Applications and rules are posted on the department website.

Questions? Contact Education  
Chairman Delores Woolf  
at **deloreswoolf@gmail.com**  
or 608-778-1936.



Badger  
Girls State

## HELP WANTED!

**ALA Badger Girls State Counselors,  
and Staff are still needed!  
Friday, June 19 – Friday, June 26  
UW-Oshkosh Campus**

If you can volunteer the whole week  
or just a couple days,  
please review the opportunities  
available and submit  
an online application  
([www.ALABGS.org](http://www.ALABGS.org) >  
About ALABGS >  
ALABGS Volunteer Info)

**Questions?**  
Contact ALABGS Chairman  
Danyelle Thompson  
at [alabgs.chairman@gmail.com](mailto:alabgs.chairman@gmail.com)



WHO WAS ON SANTA'S NICE LIST?



ABOVE: Linda Kaufman, member of Gordon ALA Unit 499, enlisted the help of new friends and neighbors in her apartment building. The volunteers used their time and resources to decorate Christmas stockings and sent gifts and handmade cards to an active duty military platoon to brighten their holidays.

TOP RIGHT: ALA Unit 154 has helped families in Mondovi and the surrounding area for more than 70 years, evolving from homecooked meals to toys to wishes requested by children needing extra care at the holidays. Pictured are volunteers who helped in the gift distribution. Twenty-eight families with 74 children were served through tags selected and paid for by community shoppers.

AT RIGHT: Members of the Wisconsin American Legion Family from Post 133 in Camp Douglas participated in Wreaths Across America. Volunteers placed over 400 wreaths on veterans' graves in five area cemeteries.

BELOW AND BOTTOM RIGHT: Joyce Hafemann of ALA Unit 372 in Forestville organized the town's first Wreaths Across America ceremony in honor of its local veterans. Community members honored veterans buried at Saint Peter's Lutheran Cemetery and the Forestville Town Cemetery. Photos courtesy of Dave Melancon.



Thank you to all the volunteers who made donations or helped place wreaths on graves throughout Wisconsin.



MAZOMANIE LEGION FAMILY HONORS MILITARY FAMILIES

Mazomanie Post/Unit 437 recently presented Blue Star Banners to recognize families with members serving in the military.



Mike and Dee Bass received a Blue Star Banner in recognition of their son, Sergeant Terrence Bass, currently serving with the US Army. Sergeant Bass enlisted in the Army on April 3, 2008, and has been deployed three times.



Shelley Drager and Phil Haas presented Amy and Jared Holcomb with a Blue Star Banner in honor of their son, Corporal Jonathon Holcomb. Corporal Holcomb's service in the US Marine Corps the past several years has focused primarily on embassy duties as a Marine Security Guard in both Tunesia and Kosovo.

POPPY MAKING WORKSHOP



The Auxiliary hosted a workshop at the 2026 Mid-winter Conference for veterans interested in learning to make poppies for the ALA Poppy Shop. Brenda Tryba of Post 179 conducted the training for eight veterans. Pictured: Brenda Tryba and Post Commander Jeremy M. Carolfi of Brookfield Post 298.

Wisconsin is one of the few states that distributes traditional crepe paper poppies **made by Veterans**. Veterans interested in becoming a Poppy Maker for the Poppy Shop should contact Bonnie Jakubczyk at [wipoppyshop@yahoo.com](mailto:wipoppyshop@yahoo.com). Veteran poppy makers earn \$100 per completed poppy kit. All materials are provided by Department.



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 2026.**

QUILTS OF VALOR



QUILTS OF VALOR:  
ALA UNIT 189

Elizabeth Brennecke and Mary Rollert, members of ALA Unit 189 and Quilters on the Rock, presented a Quilt of Valor to John H. Himrich on his 90th birthday.



QUILTS OF VALOR:  
ALA UNIT 437

ALA Unit 437 in Mazomanie recently honored two veterans, Les Sander and Jim DeVoe, with Quilts of Valor. These Valor Quilts were presented by Mera O'Connell and Connie Handel from the Mazomanie Material Girls. Photo courtesy of Suzi Mickelson.

POPPY POSTER CONTEST

**Kathy Grom**  
Department Chairman  
[kathy.grom@gmail.com](mailto:kathy.grom@gmail.com)  
414-331-0302

Students in grades 2–12 are invited to participate in this year's ALA Poppy Poster Contest. This annual event encourages students to honor U.S. veterans by creating original artwork featuring the red remembrance poppy. Posters must include a hand drawn red poppy, a slogan of no more than ten words, and the words "American Legion Auxiliary." All artwork must be original and created by a single student. Grade level categories range from grades 2 through 12, with a separate category for students with special needs. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to express creativity while learning the significance of the poppy as a symbol of military sacrifice.

**Timeline:**

- February–March: Local contests announced in schools by the units.
- March–April: Posters due to local ALA units.
- April–May: District and department judging. The deadline for each unit to get their choices to Department is May 1.

- Summer: National winners selected.
- Judges evaluate posters based on artistic ability, originality, theme clarity and effectiveness, neatness and craftsmanship, and adherence to all official rules. The rules can be found on the national website. All entries must include the Poppy Poster Contest Cover Sheet.
- Please consider working this amazing program. Thank you.

CANDIDATES FOR  
DEPARTMENT &  
NATIONAL OFFICES

Candidates for department or national offices must email their announcement (300-350 words) with head/shoulder photo to [deptsec@amlegionauxwi.org](mailto:deptsec@amlegionauxwi.org) by **Monday, March 16, 2026** for publication in the April issue of the *Wisconsin*.





**Nathan Bond**  
Department  
Commander

In sports history, very few individuals have successfully transitioned from being outstanding players to becoming excellent coaches. Fewer still have performed both roles at the same time with much success. Even one of the most noteworthy exceptions, Boston Celtics Coach Bill Russell, eventually traded his high-tops for dress shoes only.

In our Wisconsin American Legion Family, we don't really have a choice. Our leaders must make the transition from player to coach—from Commander to Past Commander. The health and future of our organization demand it. The American Legion has survived for over 100 years because we have, by and large, done this well. Our most successful Posts, Units, Squadrons, and Chapters are those where past officeholders actively work to make current officeholders—and therefore the Local Legion Family—successful. These leaders don't simply dump responsibilities on the next person, but they also don't try to rule from behind the scenes. They coach, mentor, and support.

The most important thing a leader does is develop future leaders. If, as the elected leader of your Local Legion Family (Post, Unit, Squadron, or Chapter), there is no one prepared to take charge after you, then you are not fully accomplishing the mission. Past Department Commander Karl Stuvengen's motto was,

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

LEGACY FORWARD: FROM BEING A PLAYER ON THE COURT TO BEING A COACH ON THE SIDELINES

"Recruit the Next You!" He didn't mean just to sign up a new member. He meant to identify, encourage, and train members to take on leadership responsibilities. None of us will live forever, but the legacy of The American Legion must live on after us. To accomplish that mission, each of us needs to take a closer look at how we are—or are not—developing leaders.

That closer look must begin in the mirror. As a commander or president, am I trying to do it all myself? Am I delegating responsibilities to others? Am I allowing people to do things their own way, or insisting they do them my way? Am I open to new ideas, or do I think, "We've never done that before," and quietly quash the creativity of others? These are tough questions, and the honest answers are not always flattering. But they are necessary if we hope to see our Posts and Units thrive in the next generation.

I can already hear the objection: "But nobody else wants the job. If I don't do it, it won't get done." Developing new leaders is not just a science; it is also an art. Building people up takes time, patience, and intentional effort. Start people out with small tasks and help them grow into major roles and responsibilities. Leadership is rarely assumed overnight; it is usually cultivated over time.

And yes, it takes time and effort. Seeds don't grow unless they are planted. Relationships are the soil in which leaders grow, and no one grows into leadership without being coached. The best

coaches have genuine relationships with their players. They know their players' strengths and weaknesses. They know the challenges their players face both on and off the court. In the same way, the most "expensive" part of being a Legion leader ought to be your coffee or beer tab. Conversations with promising future leaders over a cup of coffee or a beer are vital to keeping the legacy of your Local Legion Family—and the legacy of The American Legion—alive.

So what do we do with this?  
For every Legion Family leader reading this, I ask you to do the following:

- (1) Ask yourself those tough questions—and make changes if you don't like your answers.
- (2) Identify members with potential, even if they don't see it in themselves yet.
- (3) Find a place that serves a good cup of coffee (or your social beverage of choice).
- (4) Invite that promising future leader out for a conversation.
- (5) Give or create opportunities for those future leaders to try, fail, learn, and succeed.
- (6) Help them find their own way toward success, not just your way.
- (7) Repeat steps 1 through 6.

If we commit to moving from being players on the court to being coaches on the sidelines, we will ensure that our Posts, Units, Squadrons, and Chapters remain vibrant and strong—not just today, but for generations to come.



**Sue Hembrook**  
Department  
President

Midwinter Conference has wrapped up as this article is being written. It proved to be a huge success. Attendance was the largest it has been since COVID and everyone there was engaged and ready to experience all that the conference had to offer. The interactions of the Family were highlighted in many of the classes and everyone added to the discussions on various ways the posts, units and squadrons can and are successfully working together for a common cause. Focus on the "mission" is the key to getting things done successfully.

The Auxiliary session was also very well attended. This session focused on the new online reporting method. Members were eager to learn of this new way of doing reporting online. It was amazing to see how this new process will make it so very much easier for units to submit their year end reports. More information will be available when it gets closer to reporting time. However, those in attendance realized the ease of this new process. Your department officers are ready, willing and able to answer any questions when it comes time to complete the forms.

Hospital tours are also happening at this time. It is so very rewarding to see the excellent care our veterans receive at our VA's and State Homes. Wisconsin is very fortunate to have so many facilities that serve our veterans and make care very accessible. The outpatient clinics around the state also provide services that help to make it easier and more affordable for our veterans to receive the health care services they require. Our facilities are staffed by exceptional health care workers and volunteers. It is truly amazing how compassionate and caring these dedicated people are that serve our veterans. It is almost as if they are caring for their own family members and that is evident in each and every one of our facilities.

Your generosity in providing material and financial donations to assist our volunteers and staff is phenomenal. Donations provide our veterans with the extras that make their stay more comfortable and enjoyable and are so very much appreciated. At Midwinter we had asked for cash donations for these "extras" and again you excelled. Approximately \$2,500 was collected to provide the extra toiletries, etc. that make our veterans more comfortable. Thank you, so very much! We will distribute these funds to each facility.

"It's amazing what can be done when nobody cares who gets the credit," Harry S. Truman.



**Christopher Dannenmann**  
SAL Detachment  
Commander

Welcome aboard to all of our newest members and squadrons throughout the state. We currently have 7 new squadrons that have been chartered so far this year. Thank you for choosing the Sons of The American Legion to honor your family members who have served. Special thanks to all of the Post, District, Detachment, Blue cappers and dual members. Your selflessness dedication to The American Legion Family, its heritage and legacy shines because of YOU.

SAL DETACHMENT COMMANDER

'It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.'  
— Harry S. Truman

Warm welcome to National Commander Bill Clancy to Wisconsin! As we enter into the coldest part of the year, Operation Comfort Warrior is in high gear all across the state. Whether you call it OCW, Operation Homeless Vets, Freez'in for a Reason or something else, our help is needed. Stop by a Squadron or Post and lend a hand to your comrades for those in need. This is also when Blood Banks and Food Banks are stretched to their limits. Our combined efforts can ease the burden of need and provide support to these vital organizations.

The ALF Dogs continue to be a favorite with each event we attend. We recently had three events scheduled in three different locations on the same day. Then, it snowed... a lot. Two of the events went well, handing out over 400 ALF Dogs. The third event in Milwaukee was not so lucky. Mother

Nature snowed-in our trailer and the plows ran behind schedule. It's Wisconsin- it happens.

Thanks to everyone that attended our Mid-Winter Conference and National Vice Commander Frank Meraz, Jr., for his knowledge, leadership and thoughtful words of inspiration. A special thank you to Leonard from Squadron 33 Neenah for his role as Assistant Chaplain.

You all have accomplished SO much- let's keep track of the difference we are making. Whether its Operation Comfort Warrior, Badger Boys State, Child Well-Being Fund, or a Blood Drive. Report all of your Squadron activities on your CSR's. Please send them into Detachment by June 1 so Congress can see what the Sons of The American Legion do to strengthen the Four Pillars of The American Legion.

Where there is a need, there is a Son.



**Todd Nofsinger**  
Asst. State Director  
American Legion  
Riders Association

I was nominated and then voted in by my fellow Legion Riders to assume the role of Assistant State Director working along side our state Director Corey Doehrmann as well as all other state officers. My biggest role in the Legion Riders to date has been planning and contacting the local Legion Posts to coordinate the stops for our state ride. I am also the membership chairman for the District 3 Riders. I have participated in 8 of

LEGION RIDERS DIRECTOR

Greetings to my fellow Legionnaires and fellow Legion Riders. My name is Todd "Noffy" Nofsinger. I retired from the Army Reserve 1 July 2024 after spending 40 years in the Armed services of Army National Guard, Air National Guard and retiring from the Army Reserve. I have been in the Wisconsin American Legion since 2005 and a member of the Legion Riders since 2006.

the American Legion National Legacy Rides, being the tail gunner in the "M trailer trash flight". I have also participated in all 10 of the state rides, except for 2017 when I was mobilized in Texas for the Army Reserve.

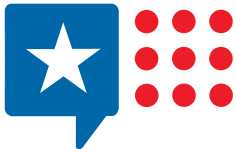
One of my missions for the upcoming year is to visit each District for one of their Legion Rider meetings to spread the word of the importance of participation in events at their respective posts as well as activities within their communities.

We will be having another state ride this year, with a safety meeting at Kenosha Post 21 on 25 June and the ride taking place 26-28 June, ending at Post 147 in Medford.

I look forward to serving my fellow Legionnaires and Riders in the upcoming year. Thank you all for your support.

If you have questions regarding The American Legion Riders please feel free to contact me at: [widistrict3alra@gmail.com](mailto:widistrict3alra@gmail.com).

Veterans  
Crisis Line



DIAL 988  
then PRESS 1