



Up To Now!

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MIDWINTER CONFERENCE STARTS FEBRUARY 23

The South Dakota American Legion's 36th Annual MidWinter Conference commences, February 23 at the Crossroads Hotel and Huron Event Center. William F. Reaves American Legion Post 7 of Huron will be hosting the event. Huron American Legion Post 7 Commander Keith Schrader and Huron American Legion Auxiliary Unit 7 President Mavis Leif will share the duties of host and hostess for the annual gathering. The conference, which runs February 23-25, was last held in Huron in 1998.

The American Legion MidWinter Conferences were started in 1972 when The American Legion held the very first MidWinter Conference in Huron, SD under the direction of then State Commander Robert C. Gabrielson of Hoven, SD. Gabrielson instituted the MidWinter Conferences as a "mid-term mini convention" to review progress and set up planning for the remainder of the Legion year. The first conference in Huron included training seminars, entertainment, special meetings of the organizations various committees and commissions, social functions, and other activities related to the 1972 Priority Program. Colonel Ted Saunders, Chief of Staff for the SD Army National Guard, was the keynote speaker for the Conference Banquet. The 1972 conference also included a "job fair" for returning Vietnam Veterans. According to the March 1972 edition of *The South Dakota Legion News*, the three-day event in 1972 drew an estimated 300 Legionnaires and American Legion Auxiliary members from all across the state of South Dakota.

It is estimated that this year's MidWinter Conference will draw 350-375 Legionnaires, American Legion Auxiliary, and Sons of The American Legion members from across the state. The Crossroads Hotel and Huron Event Center will be the focal point for the conference activities. The initial events will consist of the semi-annual meetings of the Administrative and Executive Committees on Friday, February 23. The Administrative and Executive Committees are the governing bodies of the organization between annual conventions and they will both meet at the Crossroads at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., respectively.

Friday evening, those Legionnaires who have been designated as Go-Getters for their efforts in support of the organization's 2007 membership drive will be the guests of the organization at the Go-Getter's Reception and Smorgasbord that will be held at the Huron Veterans Club.

Saturday, February 24, will start with a Joint Opening Session for all members of The American Legion Family at 8:00 a.m. The focus during the Joint Opening Session will be reports on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Children and Youth Programs, National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, Operation Military Kids and a briefing by Mr. Denis Tapella of the IRS on non-profit and veteran service organizations' income tax consequences. Following the conclusion of the Joint Opening Session, The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion will split into three separate organizational meetings at 10:30 a.m.

During The American Legion's separate session, Legionnaires will receive the latest information related to Veterans Employment, Foreign Relations, National Security, Americanism, Public Relations, state and national Legislation, Membership and Post Activities. State Commander Gunner Baatrup will present several membership awards during the session.

Saturday evening, the main social event of the conference, The American Legion, Auxiliary and SAL Joint Banquet will be held at the Crossroads. Special guest and keynote speaker for the event will be David K. Rehbein of the Department of Iowa, candidate for National Commander of The American Legion for 2008-2009. Attendees at the Joint Banquet must reserve tickets in advance by contacting the local Huron American Legion Post.

David Rehbein was inducted into the U.S. Army in December 1969. He served with the 2nd Battalion, 51st Infantry, 4th Armored Division in Germany until his discharge in 1971. He attained the rank of Sergeant (E-5) during his enlistment. David has served in many capacities within The American Legion. At the Post level he served as Commander, Adjutant, Finance Officer and Newsletter Editor. At the District level he served as Commander, Adjutant, Sergeant-At-Arms, and Judge Advocate. At the Department level he served as Vice Commander, Membership Chairman, Oratorical Chairman, Jr. Shooting Sports Chairman; and was involved with the Department Leadership College, and Strategic Planning, and served on the Department Foundation Board of Directors. At the National level he has served as National Executive Committeeman (NEC) for the Department of Iowa, NEC Committee on Committees, NEC Resolutions Subcommittee, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission, Chairman of the Legislative Commission, member of the Americanism Commission; has served as an Instructor at National Regional Information Conferences; has served on the staff of National Oratorical Contest Finals; has served on the Staff of the Junior Shooting Sports National Finals; has served as Match Director for Junior Shooting Sports National Finals and has served as a member of the National Legislative Council. Rehbein will be accompanied by his wife Ann.

Sunday's activities include a non-denominational memorial service in the morning. The service will be conducted by State American Legion Chaplain Patrick Lewellen of Spearfish, State American Legion Auxiliary Chaplain Diane MacDonald of Rapid City, and Sons of The American Legion Chaplain Michael Goetzinger of Martin.

DSO AAS TO ATTEND NATIONAL DSO SCHOOL

Department Service Officer Warren Aas of Watertown will be attending the National Department Service Officer School in Washington, D.C., February 27-March 3, 2007.

The training is provided annually for Department Service Officers to ensure that they have the latest information on veterans' benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Also attending the training will be Jon Gohn and Julie Sterns, both of whom are veterans benefits representatives who work for the South Dakota Division of Veterans Affairs at the SD Division of Veterans Affairs Claims Office located in the Veterans Affairs Regional Office on the campus of the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center.

FIVE STUDENTS QUALIFY AS FINALISTS FOR DEPARTMENT ORATORICAL CONTEST

Five South Dakota High School students have qualified as Finalists in The South Dakota American Legion High School Oratorical Contest. These five finalists have proven their abilities as orators in previous competition in local Post competition, District competition and have now emerged as the finalists from their respective Areas contests.

The five will appear at the State Finals of the South Dakota Ameri-

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can Legion High School Oratorical Contest which will be held on Saturday, February 25, 2007 at the Crossroads Hotel in Huron, SD at 1:00 p.m. The state finals will be the final event associated with the 36th Annual MidWinter Conference. Each of the five finalists will receive a \$100 scholarship for winning their respective area contest. The scholarships awarded at the state finals will consist of: \$1,000 for the first place winner; \$500 for the second place winner; \$300 for the third place winner; fourth and fifth place winners will each receive an additional \$100 scholarship.

Representing the five areas will be the following students:

Districts 1 & 7 – Meg Henrickson of Yankton, a sophomore at Yankton High School

Districts 2, 5 & 6 – Ben Kantack of Brookings, a junior at Brookings High School

Districts 3, 4 & 14 – Alex Robertson of Watertown, a senior at Watertown High School

Districts 8, 9 & 13 – Toby Harter of Colome, a senior at Colome High School

Districts 10, 11 & 12 – Zoey DeWolf of Lead, a senior at Lead-Deadwood High School.

The five finalists will be vying for the State Championship. The victor will represent The American Legion Department of South Dakota in The American Legion National High School Oratorical Championship contest in Indianapolis, Indiana in April.

The National Championship High School Oratorical Championship provides scholarships to the top three national winners. First place will take home an \$18,000 scholarship; second place will receive a \$16,000 scholarship and the third place winner will receive a \$14,000 scholarship.

ATHLETIC COMMISSION IMPLEMENTS NEW RECRUITING RULES FOR RAPID CITY

On Feb 17th, 2007 the SD American Legion Athletic Commission met in Huron, SD and discussed a proposed change in American Legion Baseball recruiting directives outlined for Rapid City. After a lengthy discussion it was determined that the plan currently in effect was not working.

In a unanimous decision by the Athletic Commission a new plan has been implemented immediately for Rapid City. It is as follows.

National American Legion Rule 4.A. allows for two (2) Posts to share a common base school and the base school used will be Rapid City Central High School. So along with sharing the same base school some other restrictions will also be implemented as follows:

- A. Rapid City Central High School will be the base school for both Post 22 and Post 320.
- B. Rapid City Central High School Students will have a choice as to which team they will participate.
- C. Players from a non-base school closest to Rapid City Central School will also have a choice as to which team they will participate.
- D. All Players will be allowed to transfer 1 time to the next closest team upon meeting the newly defined South Dakota meaning of the word TRY-OUT.

This will solve many of the recruiting issues brought to our attention by both respective Posts. This will be a step in the right direction and will be better for all of baseball in Rapid City.

ATHLETIC COMMISSION ANNOUNCES INCREASE IN REGISTRATION FEES

During the February 17th meeting of the South Dakota American Legion Athletic Commission, Chairman Dan Sudbeck reminded those in attendance that at the January 2006 meeting it had been decided that the fees for registering a Legion Baseball team in South Dakota would increase to \$100 for the 2007 American Legion Baseball season. This

reflects a \$30 per year increase over the previous cost of registering a team in South Dakota.

Consequently, the cost of late registrations will also increase effective with this year's registration. Those Posts that do not meet the May 15th deadline for regular registration will face increased costs. Registrations received between May 16 and May 31 will be \$150 and registrations received between June 1 and June 15 will cost \$200. Teams not registered by June 15 will not be permitted to participate in American Legion Baseball.

If a Post sponsors one or more teams, ALL TEAMS must be registered and insured.

BIDS NEEDED FOR STATE GOLF TOURNAMENT

When the Department Athletic Commission met in Huron on February 17, 2007, State Headquarters had not yet received any bids from Posts wishing to host the 2008 American Legion State Golf Tournament.

Chairman Dan Sudbeck of Dimock has requested that the bidding be re-opened to accept bids for hosting the 2008 State Golf Tournament. Chairman Sudbeck stated that the commission would be willing to look at alternate dates other than just the previously advertised weekends in June, and that the commission would give serious considerations to bids that recommended a change in the format of the tournament.

Therefore, bids will again be accepted for the 2008 State American Legion Golf Tournament. The deadline set for receipt of bids at State Headquarters in Watertown is March 31, 2007.

ENCLOSED FOR ADJUTANTS

A copy of the Annual Post Americanism Report is enclosed for all Adjutants. This document is important to record the participation of your Post in the Americanism Programs of The American Legion. This document, along with other supporting documents and information will be used by the members of the Department Americanism Commission when they decide which Posts within the Department will be recognized by the awarding of the "Golden Eagle" traveling Americanism trophies at the Department Convention in Spearfish this year.

The deadline for submitting the Annual Post Americanism Report is the date of the Spring District Convention within your respective Districts. The Americanism Commission will meet at this year's Boys State Session to judge Post Americanism Reports for the purpose of selecting this year's recipients of the Americanism Excellence.

The submission of the Annual Americanism Report is also a requirement for any Post that wishes to be designated as a Dakota Dream Post for 2007.

Also enclosed for the Adjutant is a copy of the 2008 Post Data Form which is used to provide National Headquarters with the necessary information to prepare the Direct Membership Renewal Notices that are sent out by National Headquarters to our Post members. We realize that most Posts filled one of these data forms out in November/December of 2006, however, that information was for establishing your Post dues for the 2007 membership year, after the dues increase that took place in January.

This Post Data Form is to establish your dues rate for the upcoming 2008 membership year. Keep in mind that the minimum amount for dues should be sufficient to cover the \$23.50 per member that must be submitted to Department Headquarters to cover the \$10.00 Department per capita dues, and the \$13.50 per capital dues rate. Any amount over and above that \$23.50 will be retained by the local Post to help support the operations of your Post and your Post programs.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

2007 membership stands at 24,041 or 92.38 percent of the Department's 2007 membership goal.