Lily Lives in the Legion

By Courtney VanZanten, Department Service Officer
Lily, SD; Population: 0.

The town of Lily formally unincorporated in 2017. Driving into town, it's still well kept; there's an artist from Minneapolis who, with a few friends, owns the majority of the standing houses in town for use as a seasonal photography retreat. Lawns are mowed, and the local historical society has kept town buildings, such as the post office, painted. The only sign of life in Lily most days, however, is the American Flag flying proudly in front of the Engebretson-Lien American Legion Post #156.

Post #156 was chartered in 1947, named after Raymond Engebretson, a Marine Corps pilot who lost his life in WWII, and later, Ralph Lien, an Army private who died in Korea. The post home, built in 1949, was funded by Legionnaires selling bonds to community members. The Auxiliary started the same year.

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At its all time high in 1981, 94 Legionnaires filled the roster. These days, there are only 14 members who call the Lily post home. Most live in surrounding communities, with a few out of state. Their numbers are small, but dedicated to the legacy left by their fathers, family and friends before them.

Despite the numbers, activity abounds. There's an annual Turkey Shoot on the last Saturday before Thanksgiving that draws 200-300 people, and a Memorial Day program that always brings a crowd. "The Post has an active honor guard, helping out neighboring posts when called upon for funeral honors. The old Post home is slowly but surely getting a new tin roof, with plans to tin the siding as well.

It admittedly isn't what it used to be. The smooth wooden floor that once boasted half a dozen dances every summer rarely gets rented out anymore. It's a significantly smaller group showing up for Post work parties, often relying on cousins and other community members for assistance. And sometimes, it's hard to come up with enough to do an Honor Guard.

The resolve amongst members is evident, however. "Austin has an AK with a 20-round clip. We could put one in the chamber and he could be our one man firing squad. We're not dead yet," Sergeant-at-Arms Gary Fossum offered with a wry smile.

All four men in the room joined the American Legion shortly after they got back from the service. "I returned home on February 6th, and I think those old boys had me tracked down by February 10th," recalled Austin Schiely, who served as Post Commander in 1968. With dwindling numbers, the burden of responsibility has long been on the few—but to paraphrase the Preamble, their innate sense of individual obligation to their community keeps them from burning out.

"This is our heritage and history," said Larry Lynch, Post Adjutant. "It's the last active building in Lily." His brother, Doug Lynch, is Post Commander. "We hope someday someone will want to step up and pick up our work here. But, even if they don't, we'll go until we can't go any more."

Memories flowed as the evening progressed. A Boy Scout Troop Leader who took down a kamikaze plane as a tail gunner during WWII and became a local legend. War stories from Vietnam. Nicknames earned through small town shenanigans. Tales of Hawaiian-style pig roasts during the summer, and dances that would last until the wee hours of the morning. Listening to these Legionnaires talk, a realization was made—this wasn't just camaraderie amongst veterans, but a vibrant oral history of a town now off the map.

Post #156 serves as a lesson to all Posts, in that they are bigger than "just" the American Legion. I left Lily with a renewed sense of what my Post means to my small town, and a certainty that as long as the Legion lives in Lily, Lily lives in the Legion.

Welcome to this Special Edition of the South Dakota Legion News:

With COVID-19 forcing the cancellation of Department and District-level meetings, information that would normally disseminate to the Posts has come to a standstill. To help reconnect with our entire membership, the Department Executive Committee elected to send out this Special Edition of the South Dakota Legion News.

Inside, you'll find articles typical to the News, but also the South Dakota American Legion Primer. This primer covers all Four Pillars and the programs that fall under them, respectively. Additionally, there's handy information about Department-level awards, meetings and opportunities for involvement. If there's a program or project in these pages that grabs your attention, we highly encourage you to reach out to the Chairman or Point of Contact and make your interest known.

There is a niche for every Legionnaire out there, and if our programs are led by those who have a passion for them, our organization will be better for it. We have incredible talent and potential within our membership—we're asking you to help us find it!

Answer a 5-question survey and be entered to win a free South Dakota American Legion T-Shirt! One given away for each District. Find the survey here: www.sdlegion.org/legion-news

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Volume 88, Issue 1
Special Edition
August 2020

The South Dakota
Legion News
For God and Country, we associate together!

INVITE A MEMBER OF THE SAL SQUADRON, THE AUXILIARY UNIT, AND THE ALR CHAPTER TO YOUR POST AS A WAY TO REACH OUT TO A WIDER AUDIENCE AND INCREASE MEMBERSHIP.

I encourage all Posts to work in cooperation with their American Legion Family members. For example, if you have a Sons of the American Legion group, get them involved also. It is a proven fact, Posts where the community and in turn the community supports the Post. If the Post has an Auxiliary, or advertise what you are going to do and what you have done. An active Post supports the Department Adjutant

Kevin Hempel
Department Adjutant

Legionnaires, As I sit in front of my computer, I am contemplating what I should talk about for this edition of the South Dakota Legion News. As the new guy in the office, I find I am learning something new every day and often from a different perspective than I had before. After sitting in the Adjutant's seat for a little over two months, I would like to address a couple of the challenges we continue to face.

The data is analyzed and used to determine which programs are working and what might be done to improve. The data is also used by the National Commander when he or she reports to Congress on what The American Legion is doing. I would like to make a recommendation how to make it easier. At the start of the year, go through what is to be reported, and keep a running tally so that at the end of the year, the information is readily available to put into the report and submit. Another example is the Enforcement Appreciation Ride where you stopped at local law enforcement agencies and inviting them to their CPRs. Congratulations to Arlington Post 42 on their new Post home. Thank you, Garretson Post 23, for donating $5,000 this past year to the South Dakota American Legion Foundation. Lastly, thank you American Legion Riders #164 for doing the Community

Find Post Information here: https://www.sdlegion.org/district-posts-maps/
Find us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/sdamericanlegion/
Doug Feltman Awarded Gabrielson Trophy

Past Department Commanders present District 6 Commander Doug Feltman with the Gabrielson Award. Pictured left to right: Denny Brenden, Fred Nelson, Doug Feltman, Paul Emerson, Jim Huls and Hugh Holmes.

Making the Mission Work:
Community Support, Fundraising and Sweat Equity with DTOM 22/0

This is Part Two of a series on the DTOM 22/0 Ranch. To read about the organization’s founding and mission, please read Part One in the June 2020 SD Legion News at www.sdlegion.org.

By Courtney VanZanten, Department Service Officer

When Warner Legionnaire Chris Reder set off to create the DTOM 22/0 Foundation, the Draper Method trained horse—making each full therapy regimen nearly $2000. The Ranch is constantly working to completely cover costs to Veterans, reaching out to local community businesses, civic organizations and Veterans Service Organizations. The local Posts have responded to the call, recognizing Reder’s work within the realm of their own mission. “Warner Post #137 donated $5,000, and Stratford #207 donated $2,500,” Reder stated, “They’re helping their brothers and sisters in need. By supporting our program here, they’re directly impacting the American Legion pillar of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation. We live and breathe it every day!”

For many American Legion posts, donation numbers trickle in at an unassuming rate. In 2020, DDOTM 22/0 Ranch work off more than just money—sweat equity and stuff are appreciated too. “We raised funds and paid cash for a 50’x60’ barn to be built for the therapy arena. The project brought together amazing local businesses like Blumhardt Construction, whose owner was on-site daily for over a month donating all of his time, equipment and supplies to honor his father, who served in the US Marine Corps. Quest Construction donated an entire crew of 5 guys, equipment and supplies for several days to put the roof on the barn, which was a great expense for them. IGE in Aberdeen donated the use of a new telehandler to help with the project. Another local couple just donated an Oliver Tractor to help at the Ranch, and we have had a work truck and riding lawn mower donated from a local couple. It takes a little bit of everything and everybody working together to keep this place going.”

Recently, the Ranch was approached by the Aberdeen Homebuilders Association, who wanted to offer workshops to Veterans to teach them the skills needed to acquire jobs within their companies. Reder jumped at the opportunity, and took it one step further—what if the workshops focused on building tiny houses on the Ranch for Veterans who had to travel in for therapy? Some outside-the-box thinking that resulted in a win-win situation—albeit on hold, given the current circumstances with COVID-19.

The DTOM 22/0 Ranch provides a great service to our Veterans, and serves as a guidepost for organizations: show how your fundrais- ing is helping your community, provide alternative ways to give, and always be open to new ideas. Success comes with hard work and dedication to the mission. For Posts who lack either the funds or the manpower, remember that missions can be shared across organi- zations—find one to support, and run with it. For more information the the DTOM 22/0 Ranch: https://dtom220.org/
Children & Youth

The American Legion has a proud tradition of supporting our nation’s youth. The organization was founded on the principle in 1919, when Children & Youth was declared one of the American Legion’s four pillars. In South Dakota, our hallmark program for Children & Youth is Temporary Financial Assistance, which awards cash grants to minor children of current active duty or American Legion members. These grants help families in need meet the cost of shelter, food, utilities and health expenses, thereby keeping the child or children in a more stable environment. Other undertakings include Halloween Safety, Operation Military Kids, Special Olympics and additional local initiatives.

SD Legion Partners With Dollar Tree for Operation Homefront

This year, the South Dakota American Legion is proud to be a part of Dollar Tree Operation Homefront’s annual nationwide school supply collection and distribution campaign. Since inception, Operation Homefront has distributed 350,000 backpacks to military (to include Veteran) children. Operation Homefront and Dollar Tree Inc. have joined forces for 12 consecutive years to collect and distribute school supplies for military children. Utilizing volunteers across South Dakota, the American Legion will pick up donated school supplies throughout the month of July. The donated supplies will then be brought together, organized into complete backpacks and distributed across the state. A special thank you to our volunteers: Steve Nenmers, Hugh Holmes and Kevin Hempel. Additionally, Operation Homefront will be collecting donated toys during the month of November. As in July, Legion volunteers will gather donations from Sioux Falls, Mitchell, Aberdeen and Watertown locations, and provide toys to families in time for the holiday season. Support the program by donating to one of the four locations today!

From the Chair

Legion Family,

Thank you for allowing me to serve another year as your Children & Youth Chairman. I’m excited about our new partnership with Dollar Tree—this will greatly expand the backpack initiative we started two years ago. But today, I want to talk to you about our “bread and butter” Children & Youth program: Temporary Financial Assistance.

Since 1919, The American Legion has remained committed to the health and welfare of our nation’s veterans and families. The American Legion has a form of direct aid to veterans’ children called Temporary Financial Assistance or (TFA) for short. Through TFA, a post can call upon our American Legion, Department of South Dakota for cash assistance to help maintain the basic needs of veterans’ children.

Non-repayable grants are awarded to eligible families with a child in need when all other available resources have been exhausted.

Temporary Financial Assistance is specifically designed to assist minor children of eligible veterans through cash grants, which contribute to a stable home environment. The TFA grant money helps families meet the costs of shelter, utilities, food and medical expenses.

Maintenance grants may be used to assist with basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing and utilities. Maintenance grants cannot be awarded for previously incurred debt, except to prevent disconnection of utilities or stop eviction or foreclosure.

Medical grants for a child may be used to assist with healthcare expenses such as medical care, surgery, medications, dental care, hospitalization and dietary needs. Medical grants require a written statement from a physician outlining the problem, treatment and estimated costs. This type of grant must be approved before services are rendered. Medical grants cannot be awarded for previous medical expenses or care.

To apply for a TFA grant, you must start at your local post. All Temporary Financial Assistance applications originate at the local or post level. A local investigator (American Legion Post Commanding Officer or representative) personally visits the family to determine the children’s needs. A completed application with supporting documents and proof of military service is forwarded to the department Children & Youth chairman or department adjutant. The designated department representative reviews each case, makes a recommendation, and renders a decision.

Grants can be awarded at both the Department and National level. It is a one-time application for each level of assistance.

Eligibility for Temporary Financial Assistance is limited to minor children of veterans. The parent must have served at least one day of active duty in the Armed Forces. Membership in The American Legion is required.

To find more information, and to download the application, go here: www.sdlegion.org/children-youth/
South Dakota American Legion Awards: Firefighter/EMT & Law Enforcement of the Year

We all have them; the local heroes who, day in and day out, work to keep our communities safe. The American Legion recognizes these individuals every year through the Firefighter/EMT and Law Enforcement Officer of the Year awards. While it goes without saying that the Department wants Posts to recognize their local heroes for what they do, these awards also serve an important secondary purpose: It is firmly believed these awards serve to promote public trust and support of our law enforcement and firefighting agencies, which is more critical now than ever.

Firefighter of the Year:
The Firefighter of the Year Award to a firefighter who has exceeded the requirements expected of his or her position and has shown a distinct pattern of community service and professional achievement. The award, which takes into account heroic acts, will be given annually at the Department's National Convention. Nomination packages cover the time period of 1 July to 30 June. Distict Commanders are responsible for ensuring that nominees are forwarded to the Department by December 31st. It is recommended that Posts complete and forward their nominations in November. The application for Department Firefighter/EMT of the Year is the same as National.

Find the application here: https://www.legion.org/security/firefighter

Law Enforcement Officer of the Year:
Each year, The American Legion gives its National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award to a well-rounded law enforcement officer who has exceeded the duty requirements expected of his or her position and has demonstrated a distinct pattern of community service coupled with professional achievement. The award, which especially takes into account heroic acts, is presented annually at the Legion's Department and National Convention.

Nominations must be U.S. citizens and living, active, full-time, paid, or volunteer firefighter. Military firefighters are eligible for these awards also serve an important secondary purpose: It is firmly believed these awards serve to promote public trust and support of our law enforcement and firefighting agencies, which is more critical now than ever.

Nominees must A: be a citizen of the United States, male or female; and B: be a certified, living, active, full-time, paid, or volunteer firefighter. Military firefighters are eligible for participation in this award provided they are state firefights certified.

Nomination packages cover the time period of 1 July to 30 June. District Commanders are responsible for ensuring that nominees are forwarded to the Department by December 31st. It is recommended that Posts complete and forward their nominations in November. The application for Department Firefighter/EMT of the Year is the same as National.

Find the application here: https://www.legion.org/security/officeaward

American Legion American Radio Club
The American Legion has a special entity to provide a forum for military veterans who are engaged in a hobby that can also provide emergency communications “when all else fails.” During the May 2011 Spring Meeting, the National Executive Committee authorized the establishment of The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TA-420). There are estimated to be 700,000 federally licensed amateur radio operators, or “hams,” in the United States. Over the years, countless members of the U.S. military were trained as technicians or engineers, and later obtained amateur-radio licenses to continue to use their abilities at home, as both recreation and a public-service commitment. The beauty of amateur radio is that it attracts folks of all career interests, from doctors, Ph.D.s, engineers, rocket scientists, to mechanics, housewives, construction and office workers, students and everything in between,” says Robert L. Morrill, former chairman of the Legion’s Public Relations Commission. “Hams provide backup communications to emergency-management agencies offices across the country when ‘all else fails,’ and have done so with distinction in virtually every major disaster when cell towers and commercial communications have been knocked out after earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and man-made disasters.” The club has established an amateur radio station at National Headquarters with the call sign K9TAL (K9 The American Legion) in order to conduct special events operations on The American Legion Birthday, Veterans Day, etc.; operate SKYWARN during local severe weather; and provide members an opportunity to operate the station during visits to National Headquarters. A special QSL card is provided to all amateur radio stations that work K9TAL on the air. “The potential to serve here is limitless,” Morrill says. “Legionnaires who are hams can help others get licensed, coordinate with local emergency authorities, provide counseling and assistance to schools, and a whole array of other support.” While some people may think that ham radio is an antiquated technology, the simple truth is that hams were working with digital transmissions long before folks had home computers, and they provided the impetus to make ‘wireless’ happen. They were transmitting emergency calls from their cars long before anyone had a mobile phone to do the same. Today, hams are conducting broad-spectrum experiments on ham bands that may eventually become routine ways to communicate for all of us.” Membership is free to members of The American Legion family.

POC: Bill Huttiner, Dell Rapids
wph@siouxvalleynet
https://www.legion.org/hamradio

American Legion Blood Donor Program
People have held blood drives and given blood since community service became an American value. It’s only natural that The American Legion— with community service as one of its pillars—be heavily involved in blood donation efforts.

The American Legion Blood Donor Program has existed officially since 1942 to help that cause. Each year—especially since 9/11—Legionnaires have donated in spades, and departments have coordinated efforts at the post level. The Blood Donor Program honors those departments that best participate in blood-donation efforts, recognizing departments in two areas: for post participation and individual Legionnaire participation. Post participation awards are given to departments with the highest number of participating posts. Individual participation awards are given to departments with the highest percentage of individuals giving blood to the program. Departments are separated into five categories, according to membership size, and honored. Legionnaires participate by giving blood and reporting it to their posts, which mark the donation on their annual Consolidated Posts Reports. Similarly, posts that host blood drives mark their participation on their Consolidated Posts Reports, listing number of drives held and total pints donated (for Legionnaires and non-Legionnaires). Pins and certificates are available for recognizing those who show outstanding commitment to the Program.

A healthy donor may donate red blood cells every 56 days or double red blood cells every 112 days, according to the Red Cross. Platelets can be donated as few as seven days apart but a maximum of 24 times a year. Platelets are essential for patients who are undergoing chemotherapy or kidney transplants and have weakened immune systems. Donors are given a brief, confidential health screening prior to giving blood. Often, lingering health problems such as irregular heartbeats or high blood pressure are discovered during these screenings.

https://www.legion.org/security/blood

National Security

The American Legion is an organization of veterans who fought for freedoms, which they are dedicated to keeping and preserving. As one of the Four Pillars it was founded on, the American Legion believes national security is upheld by keeping a well-funded Department of Defense, a good quality of life for troops and a sensible transition between service and separation.

In South Dakota, the National Security pillar primarily serves veterans through local support aimed at helping the families of deployed Active Duty; Guard and Reserve. The Legislative Committee keeps a keen eye on legislation in Pierre, ensuring veterans voices are heard. As a Department, we recognize annually the men and women who serve in Law Enforcement and Firefighting capacities. There is an active HAM radio club who serve to provide communications “when all else fails.” In addition, the American Legion Blood Donor program has an active role in several posts across the state.
Doug Harris, Rapid City

The goal of American Legion Baseball is to teach character and courage for others and to promote the principles of 100 percent Americanism. It is for youth ages 13 to 19 and is sponsored by the Local Post, often partnered with community coaches or a local Baseball Association.

The American Legion is an organization dedicated to God and country, with a membership of over 100 years ago, the American Legion has been a stalwart champion of patriotic virtues, moral to law and order, the raising of wholesome youth, an educated and law-abiding citizenship.

I especially appreciate all those who attend this program and we look forward to next year.

For High School Students Freshmen to Seniors, the Oratorical Contest helps our youth explore the Constitution and is sponsored by the Local Post, often partnered with community coaches or a local Baseball Association.

The goal of American Legion Baseball is to teach character, physical strength, and mental acuity as members of society.

Scouting is meant for youth ages 5 to 18. Scouting USA (formerly the Boy Scouts) accepts applicants regardless of gender, but must be in specific units. Girl Scouts are for female participants only. As a Post, you could be the Chartering Organization responsible for logistical and possibly leadership support for the unit.

Scouting is a combination of my last two columns (Disclaimer: Most of what you will read in this column is a combination of my last two columns). I'm trying to include the 2021 dates for the programs, but at the time of this submission, those dates weren't all available and as such are identified as “proposed”.

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Boys State

Boys State was designed as a program to help our youth understand how our form of government works. It is an all-expense-paid one-week camp at Northern State University in Aberdeen (USD in Vermillion for the Girls) paid for by the Local Post so that youth, regardless of background, have a chance to engage with themselves with a program that has successfully been helping develop future leaders for over 75 years.

Proposed 2021 dates are for a 6 day session:
- May 31st – Jun 6th: Boys State was canceled in early April after the Boys State Board of Directors weighed all available Corona Virus information as well as the predicted path forward. This move was nearly unprecedented, with the only other cancellation taking place during WWII. This decision meant an entire year group of young leaders would be unable to attend this program.

After much discussion between multiple Departments and National Americanism leaders, National ruled that “American Legion departments possess the authority to establish their own criteria for Boys State program eligibility, selection, participation and operation and should proceed with their respective programs accordingly.”

As your Americanism Chairman, I will be lobbying hard to allow this year’s Junior class to apply. I hope to meet this goal along with next year’s Junior class (meaning both Juniors and Seniors for 2021). This decision will most likely be made when the Boys State Board of Directors meet this summer to plan for next year.

Congratulations go out to several of our 2019 Boys States: one received a $10,000 Samsung Scholarship and another an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy.

There are many truly outstanding individuals who attend this program and we look forward to meeting the next group.

POC: Chris VanDelist cvandelist@gmail.com
http://www.southdakotabaseballstate.com/
Each year, South Dakota Legionnaires sponsor an impressive number of Americanism activities throughout the state: Boys State, Legion Baseball, Youth Shooting Sports, Flag Education, Youth Trooper, Scouting, Oratorical Contests, and Voter Registration Drives.

The American Legion is an organization dedicated to God and country, with a membership of military veterans who take deep pride in the U.S. Flag and all that it means. Since its inception, Americanism activities have been an important part of the Legion’s mission.

Promoting the Big 3

**How to Talk About American Legion Programs in Your Community**

1. **Use the “Big 3” Handout/rack card (see the handout at https://www.sdlegion.org/documents/legion-news) article for a picture.**
2. **Visit the SDYTA website at https://www.sdlegion.org/sd-youth-trooper-academy/**
3. **Check out the South Dakota YTA website at https://www.sdyouthtrooperacademy.com/**
4. **Largest Veterans Organization in the world – All of us have spent time in the military and defended our country.**
   - **POC:** Mike Kraft
   - **bbgunrose@gmail.com**
   - **https://www.legion.org/shooting**

Youth Trooper

The South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy is a partnership between The American Legion and the South Dakota Highway Patrol, the YTA is designed to help our youth understand that higher education is very expensive and will be interested in scholarships.

- **BOYS STATE:** – The opportunity to interview their U.S. Senators, Congressmen, Governor, State Representatives, etc.
- **HOME SCHOOLS:** – Opportunity to get a “shoe in the door” . Three former attendees have now become members of the SD Highway Patrol.
- **SCOUT TROOPS:** – Opportunity to meet their political representatives and talk to them about impacts on Agriculture.
- **HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS/GROUPS:** – Opportunity for Home Schooled individuals the opportunity to get into their communities.
- **TROOPER:** – Opportunity to talk publicly and compete with others for scholarships.

Youth Trooper Academy Graduate to join the South Dakota Highway Patrol (on June 19th, 2020 two more former attendees were members of the SD Highway Patrol Graduation Class #62). See the April 2020 Legion News located online at sdlegion.org/legion-news for a picture.

Other Links

**Flag Education & Advocacy:**
- [https://www.legion.org/flag](https://www.legion.org/flag)
- [Get Out The Vote:](https://www.legion.org/vote)
- [School Award Medal Program:](https://www.legion.org/documents/legion/pdf/schoolaward.pdf)

Get the most up-to-date information for your summer activities by checking out the [American Legion’s website](https://www.legion.org).
Honor and it is time for our department to take time to submit our Consolidated Post Report (CPR). So please ensure our department submits for this award to help participate. A lot of the checklist items and numbers required for the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy is named after him. The William F. Lenker National Service Trophy is presented annually at the National Convention of The American Legion to the department of The American Legion that excels in welfare and rehabilitation work for war veterans and their dependents.

William F. Lenker was born on March 22, 1925, in Colome, SD, and passed away at age 66 in Sioux Falls, SD. He graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1949 with a degree in business administration. He served as a pilot with the 305th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force, flying B-17s in World War II. He was past commander of Sioux Falls American Legion Post #15 and was past county, district, department vice commander and state commander.

William F. Lenker was chairman of the Select Committee on Special Problems of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Program. He was a member of the National Commanders Veterans’ Planning and Coordinating Committee and he served 22 years as chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission of The American Legion and was named Chairman Emeritus. He also served 10 years as chairman of the Governor’s Veterans Commission and was chairman of the Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee for 10 years. What an honor it is to have such a prestigious award named after a great Legionnaire from the Department of South Dakota.

This is a department award (not a post award) and one that our department would be honored to walk on stage at a future national convention and receive this award. Our department has never won this award since its inception in 1929 and we would like to change that by asking our posts to help participate. A list of the checklist items and numbers required for the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy is taken from your submission of the annual Consolidated Post Report (CPR). So please take time to submit your Consolidated Post Report as complete as possible to help our department compete for this award.

It would be great if our department commander and delegates could walk on stage at a future national convention and receive the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. Only one department gets the honor and it is time for our department to get recognized.

From the Chair
Warren Aas, Watertown
Legionnaires,
On behalf of the Department Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission, which consists of Chairman Warren Aas of Watertown, Vice Chairman PDC Tim Jurgen of Milbank, Noel Cummins of Milbank, Jim Childers of Spearfish, Jerry Lolley of Sturgis, Carole Gregg of Rosebud, Gary Schumacher of De Smet, and Rebecca Tryggdal of Volga, thank you for this opportunity to serve.

Another award your VA&R Commission is working on is submitting our department for the national award called the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. The VA&R Commission is working to make sure our department submits for this award in the future.

Did you know that this prestigious award presented by The American Legion at the national level is named after one of South Dakota’s greatest Legionnaires? That’s right, his name was William F. Lenker, and the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy is named after him.

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State Veterans Cemetery Takes Shape

South Dakota is in the process of establishing its first State Veterans Cemetery. It’s located just North of I-229 in Sioux Falls. This cemetery will have the cemetery completed and operational in Spring 2021. Once complete, the cemetery will consist of multiple burial options including traditional in-ground burial, in-ground burial of cremains, columbarium niches for cremated remains as well as a scatter garden. The cemetery will be open to all eligible veterans and their eligible spouses.

The South Dakota Veterans Cemetery is actively accepting donations for the State Cemetery Expansion Fund. This fund will help the State offset the costs of construction and future maintenance. To donate: https://sdcommunityfoundation.org/for-advisors/existing-funds/south-dakota-state-veterans-cemetery-fund/

For more information on your State Veterans Cemetery please visit the SDDVA website: https://vetaffairs.sd.gov or call 605.773.3269.

Investing in America’s Future

Thousands of veterans will return to school in the next few weeks, and it is important that they understand and utilize their GI Bill® benefits in the pursuit of their education. While the GI Bill® covers nearly every imaginable school related expense from tuition, books, fees, and even a living stipend, we understand that utilizing this benefit can be confusing at times.

There are resources to assist veterans and their families obtain information about how to use their GI Bill® benefits. This information includes how to take advantage of scholarships, how to find out more about housing allowances, book supplies stipends, on-the-job training programs, apprenticeship programs, survivor and dependents assistance or transferring benefits. Here are some resources available for veterans and families:

- County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers - (contact information can be found at: https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/)
- Campus Veterans Resource Centers and Certifying Officials (contact information can be found at: http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/resources/collages.aspx)
- South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery Office: Shane Oliver (shane.oliver@state.sd.us) and Ryan Fowler (ryan.fowler@state.sd.us)

These leaders recognize the specific needs and challenges veterans face in transitioning. Their goal is to empower veterans and military-affiliated students to succeed in their educational and vocational goals. It’s investing in the future of America.

SDDVA Benefit Update

Pierre--The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is a state funded agency, tasked with assisting veterans and their families in receiving benefits. The Department works in partnership with tribal and county veterans service officers who assist veterans and families at the local level.

One of the main areas of assistance is in filing claims for veterans and their dependents. The SDDVA works with VA administration and the Veterans Benefits Administration. The claims vary from healthcare eligibility, disability compensation, nonservice connected pension, burial, and the survivor’s benefits. State veteran service officers are well trained in navigating the VA claims process. They complete all paperwork and follow each claim from submission to completion. Within the Department there are six VSOs in the Sioux Falls claims office, one VSO at the State Veterans Home in Hot Springs, four field service officers who travel the state assisting county and tribal veterans service officers, two education specialists in the Pierre office, and two claims examiners who ensure all documentation submitted to the VA or other entities is complete and correct prior to filing. The Department also has an appeals expert to assist when a claimant is not satisfied with the decision. This expert will assist veterans in disputing their decision all the way to the Board of Veterans Appeals in Washington DC. This team works diligently at keeping up with VA rules and regulations and new changes to policies and procedures to ensure each claim is decided fairly.

The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 opened the door for many Vietnam Veterans who suffered disabilities due to exposure to Agent Orange herbicides while aboard Navy ships off the coast of Vietnam. Veterans who have a diagnosis of Amyloid Light-Chain Amyloidodis, Chloracne, Chronic B cell Leukemia, Type II Diabetes, Ischemic Heart Disease, Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, Multiple Myeloma, Parkinson’s Disease, early-onset Peripheral Neuropathy, Porphyria Cutanea Tarda, Prostate Cancer, Respiratory Cancer, or Soft-Tissue Sarcoma are now eligible to receive disability compensation for those conditions if the vessel they were on was within 12 nautical miles of the Republic of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975.

Veterans were previously denied for these conditions because they weren’t considered “Roots on Ground,” are being paid retroactively for their claims. Widows of veterans who passed away from one of the conditions listed above may also be eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) as well as health care benefits.

We encourage anyone who thinks they may be entitled to these benefits to reach out to the SDDVA team or their local county or tribal veterans service officer for assistance. During this current COVID-19 pandemic, SDDVA has continued to serve veterans, their family members, and others who have made contact. Even though operations have changed they continue to be a valuable resource of information and assistance with all benefits.

This SDDVA encourages all veterans to explore the benefits they have earned through their honorable service to our country. A directory of local county and Tribal Veterans Service Officers can be found at: https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatervso.aspx. Additionally, our team of VSOs can be reached at 605.773.3269 (Pierre office) or 605.333.8669 (Sioux Falls office).

Rural Transportation Options for Veterans

Getting to and from medical appointments can be a great challenge for veterans in South Dakota. No one knew that better than Royce Loesch, past commander of American Legion Post 20 in Fort Pierre.

Loesch was aware of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Highly Rural Transportation grants and in 2015 decided to make application for, and was awarded, a grant for veterans transportation in Stanley County. Loesch’s “leave no veteran behind” attitude kept him focused and before he knew it, he and his team had applied for grants for 35 counties in South Dakota.

The VA awards Highly Rural Transportation Grants (HRT) to states and service organizations to assist veterans who live in highly rural areas, with their transportation needs to and from the VA medical centers, community-based outpatient clinics, VA Community Care facilities, and/or other approved medical appointments. The VA defines highly rural as less than seven people per square mile.

Free transportation is available to veterans living in the following counties: Aurora, Bennett, Buffalo, Butte, Campbell, Clark, Corson, Custer, Day, Dewey, Edmunds, Fall River, Faulk, Gregory, Haakon, Hardin, Harding, Hyde, Jackson, Jerauld, Jones, Kingsbury, Lyman, McCook, McPherson, Mellette, Miner, Perkins, Potter, Sanborn, Spink, Stanley, Sully, Tripp, and Ziebach. Partners are currently working to get Todd and Oglala Lakota included in this program.

Veterans in the highly rural counties in eastern South Dakota can contact River Cities Public Transit (605.945.2360) to schedule their transportation to medical appointments. Veterans in highly rural counties in western South Dakota should contact Prairie Hills Transit (605.642.6668).

What is unique about this transportation program is that veterans travel free, vehicles are wheelchair accessible, family members can travel with veteran to medical appointments for free, and the program is locally supported.

Although, the HRT Grants don’t benefit all our veterans, there are other resources available to assist veterans. Additional resources for veteran transportation to medical appointments can be found on our website at: https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/resources/Transportation.pdf.

Veterans and their families have been fighting through the years and continue today. It is important that we complete our promise to take care of the men and women who served, including assisting with transportation to and from medical appointments.

State Veterans Cemetery

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs awards congressionally chartered veterans’ organizations of the department’s Military Funeral Honors program. SDDVA pays $50 each time an honor guard detail is conducted at the funeral of a deceased veteran.

The program first started in the fall of 2015 and over $185,000 has been awarded to posts that since that time. Payments are made quarterly.

Each application submitted must include: information about the deceased veteran, pictures of a funeral director and post honor guard commander or leader; among other details. If your unit’s honor guard is interested in applying for the stipend, you can acquire a Military Funeral Honors form by contacting Jeri Smith at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs at 605-773-7253 or by visiting the website: https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/
Sons of The American Legion

Founded in 1932, Sons of The American Legion exists to honor the service and sacrifice of Legionnaires. S.A.L. members include males of all ages whose parents or grandparents served in the U.S. military and were eligible for American Legion membership. Although Sons has its own membership, the organization is not a separate entity. Rather, S.A.L. is a program of The American Legion. Many Legionnaires hold dual membership in S.A.L. As a supporting program, many Sons chapters help Legion posts with manpower for programs, funeral details and other Legion functions.

From the Commander

Sons Members and Legion Family.
Well it makes me proud to be part of such a great organization. What a year the Sons of the American Legion had in 2020: we finished number 4 out of the 55 Detachments, with 122.571 percent of membership.

Last year, National gave South Dakota a goal of 700 members, and as your state commander, I set a goal of 1000 members. My goal may have fallen short, but as a state we did it with 851 members total.

South Dakota is sitting at 95.70 renewal rate from last year, which is unheard of. We must be doing something right! We have had several new posts within the Sons in the past year. If you’ve ever considered forming a post, or didn’t even know that you could form a post, this is the year to do it! I would love to see records broken again. Sons chapters can be incredibly beneficial for American Legion posts—they can help out with everything that the Post participates in. Please contact me if you’re interested in getting a Sons started in your town!

The SAL of South Dakota now has its own emblem! Purchase jackets or shirts at Sign Design & Labeling in Colton. SD via https://americanlegion.signdesign1977.com or 605-446-3353. This company has the right to print the emblem for the state. I would like at this time to say thank you for the jobs you do within the state. It’s great to work with a group of fine people.

POC: Terry Hanson, Arlington
SAL Detachment Commander
badgerbad@gmail.com

POC: Buck DeWeese
 Liaison to American Legion Riders
deweese@rushmore.com, (605) 722-2361

Greetings Legion Family.
This report is a brief summary of SOME of the REPORTED projects by the ALR in SD.

The American Legion Riders Group is a shining star in support of the American Legion mission. Their efforts are centered around the fundamental Pillars of the American Legion.

Riders across the state make their presence known in a variety of ways. Whether its visiting the Veterans at the VA during the annual Christmas Parties, taking part in Legacy Rides that support the children of our fallen, or providing funeral escorts, you don’t have to look hard to find our Riders.

Americanism defines everything the Riders stand for. From the patches on their vests to the flags proudly waving on the backs of their bikes as Riders “Lead the Way” at parades, funerals and escorts.

We have 18 Chapters across the state, but would gladly welcome more. If you are interested in starting a chapter, please contact me. At the Winter Convention in Chamberlain, we hosted a 1 hour meeting and had representatives from 7 Chapters attend. Each shared some highlights of their Chapters 2019 events as well as plans for 2020. The group also approved and set in motion a state-wide Memorial Ride to Pierre. Scheduled for May 29, the purpose of the “Weath Rush” was to meet in Pierre for a BBQ hosted by the Pierre Chapter followed by a Saturday morning ceremonial laying of a wreath at the Capital Memorial Park. COVID-19 managed to delay the ride but not the spirit. It will be rescheduled. As evidenced by the fortitude of our Riders who rode to the last “Rolling Thunder” and braved the “thunder and rain” from the North South Legacy Ride, we won’t let Coronavirus ruin our summer. We want 2020 to be remembered for the “Can Do” spirit shown by what Riders did accomplish in support of our Veterans in 2020. We will “Continue the Legacy” of our Legion Command and Heritage of the American Legion and American Legion Riders in 2020 and into 2021.

American Legion Riders
American Legion Riders chapters are well known for their charitable work, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local children’s hospitals, schools, veterans homes, severely wounded servicemembers and scholarships. Since 2006, Riders nationwide have participated in The American Legion Legacy Run to annually raise money for the Legacy Scholarship Fund, established to provide scholarships to children of U.S. military personnel killed since Sept. 11, 2001.

American Legion Riders are extremely active in community activities, planning help and manpower whenever called upon. We are known for their charitable work, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local children’s hospitals, schools, veterans homes, severely wounded servicemembers and scholarships. Since 2006, Riders nationwide have participated in The American Legion Legacy Run to annually raise money for the Legacy Scholarship Fund, established to provide scholarships to children of U.S. military personnel killed since Sept. 11, 2001.

American Legion Riders are known for supporting the American Legion and are extremely active in community activities, planning help and manpower whenever called upon. We are known for their charitable work, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local children’s hospitals, schools, veterans homes, severely wounded servicemembers and scholarships. Since 2006, Riders nationwide have participated in The American Legion Legacy Run to annually raise money for the Legacy Scholarship Fund, established to provide scholarships to children of U.S. military personnel killed since Sept. 11, 2001.

ALR Black Hills Chapter Thanks Law Enforcement
SPFARSHI – On Monday, June 22, the Black Hills Chapter of the American Legion Riders rode with Flags flying high and made stops to thank the law enforcement officers at the Spearfish Police Department and Lawrence County Sheriff’s Office. The officers were recognized for their ongoing service to the local community.

The route included Deadwood’s Main street where many tourists made it apparent, they were pleased to see “Old Glory” waving in the breeze behind the motorcycles. Members of the ALR Black Hills Chapter wanted to honor and show respect to each and all officers who dedicate their service to protect and serve the people of our communities. The Riders call on these officers to lead Veterans’ funeral escort to the interstate or local cemetery and to help with traffic, when supporting various causes.

In the thank-you cards, words of Barbara Boter, echoed the reminder of what it takes to be a member of the Law Enforcement Family: “Law enforcement officers are never ‘off-duty.’ They are dedicated public servants who are sworn to protect public safety at any time and place that the peace is threatened. They need all the help they can get.”

Chief of Police of the Spearfish Police Department, Curtis L. Jacobs sent a message to the riders “I want to pass along our sincere thanks for the card and the show of support from the American Legion Riders. Your kind deed meant a great deal to all of my employees. These are certainly tough times for Law Enforcement in our country. Although my officers may not see the civil unrest that is occurring in other areas, it most definitely takes a toll on them. Hearing and seeing the distrust and anger directed at LE is very disheartening for those of us who’s only goal is to provide a safe community for all. People such as yourselves are why we keep coming to work every day and try to provide the best possible service we can. Thank you again, please pass along my gratitude for what you are doing and have done for our community!”

American Legion Riders

Greetings Legion Family.
This report is a brief summary of SOME of the REPORTED projects by the ALR in SD.

Alaska American Legion Riders are known for supporting the American Legion and are extremely active in community activities, planning help and manpower whenever called upon. We are known for their charitable work, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local children’s hospitals, schools, veterans homes, severely wounded servicemembers and scholarships. Since 2006, Riders nationwide have participated in The American Legion Legacy Run to annually raise money for the Legacy Scholarship Fund, established to provide scholarships to children of U.S. military personnel killed since Sept. 11, 2001.

American Legion Riders are known for supporting the American Legion and are extremely active in community activities, planning help and manpower whenever called upon. We are known for their charitable work, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local children’s hospitals, schools, veterans homes, severely wounded servicemembers and scholarships. Since 2006, Riders nationwide have participated in The American Legion Legacy Run to annually raise money for the Legacy Scholarship Fund, established to provide scholarships to children of U.S. military personnel killed since Sept. 11, 2001.

Marching On With The Legion Band

Are you a musician? We want you! We’re looking for instrumental musicians who have been involved in the South Dakota American Legion Band at some point or would like to be. While we didn’t get to perform in 2020, we will plan for the State Convention in Huron in June 2021. This is an excellent opportunity for our Legion Family to get involved as well—Auxiliary, Sons and Riders are all welcome to participate in the Band.

We hope to rally as much participation as possible from within our normal performers and especially those who have been able to join us at some point in the past. We will have our stalwarts who never miss, joined by those who are able to play from time-to-time. As in the past, we will be heavily dependent on added musicians (usually from the convention location area) to augment the band. Many of the players who joined us for past Huron conventions have passed away, moved away or no longer play. For this year, we need to reach out to invite and encourage musicians in the Huron area we know to join our band.

If you know of any potential musicians who might be able to join our ranks, please invite them to join us and get their contact info to us so they can receive subsequent convention information. At the very least, pass on names of potential players to the contacts listed below. We would love to see new instrumentalists join us to serve our veterans!”

Contact Dwayne LaFave: dwayne.laforge@gmail.com, 605-690 1650 or Marla Mosiman: mmosiman@venturecomm.net, 605-222-3313
South Dakota American Legion Foundation

The South Dakota American Legion Foundation has worked diligently to strengthen and grow well-established American Legion programs centered around Children & Youth, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Americanism, and National Security. We strive to live by our mission statement: “Helping Children and Veterans.”

Raising Money for the Future

One million dollars is a lofty goal, but the South Dakota American Legion Foundation kicked off a five-year campaign to get there, starting in 2020. The end goal would provide annual distributions that would help fund Legion programs now and in the future, providing budgetary means beyond the traditional reliance on membership dues.

Under the leadership of President Jim Kurtz, the Foundation is taking a proactive approach to fundraising. A multi-pronged approach is underway, to include the creation of a donor guide, applying for grants and establishing a potential donor list outside of the American Legion. The other Foundation board members charged with carrying out the plan include NEC Jim Huls, Tim Jurgens, Paul Evenson, Denney Brenden, Ken Sabers, Jerry Mencke, Blaine Hoff, State Commander Fred Nelson, Adjutant Kevin Hempel, Finance Officer Gary Wolkow and Judge Advocate Jay Leibel.

In preparing the donor guide, the Foundation came across some remarkable 5-year statistics in regards to the phenomenal work being performed across South Dakota — exactly the kind of work the Foundation wants to fund in perpetuity. When promoting the Foundation, use these as selling points — this is your work! Some examples include:

- $103,443 in Temporary Financial Assistance awarded from the Department and National levels
- 4,124 hours logged in VA hospitals by volunteers
- 5,832 Funeral Honors performed
- 3,428 hours hosting “Support Our Troops” Events
- 80 Baseball teams sponsored across 4 divisions yearly
- 1,486 Youth sponsored to attend Boys State

The Foundation asks each Legionnaire and Post to consider a donation. If a donation isn’t in the cards, you may anonymously submit names of potential donors for the Foundation to reach out to — perhaps there’s a local business owner whose kids played Legion baseball, or has a soft spot in their heart for Veterans in need. The Foundation needs your help identifying these philanthropists.

Why Donate?

**Lasting**. Your charitable wishes will be carried out in present and future generations because of the South Dakota Community Foundation’s careful investment strategies. The dollars you donate today will keep Legion programs running in the future! When promoting the Foundation, use these as selling points — this is your work!

**Trust**. Gifts will always be administered in accordance with your wishes. If there is a gift of $10,000 or more, the donor can designate where the funds will be administered.

**Flexibility**. You can make contributions anytime. Additionally, the South Dakota American Legion Foundation is able to accept a wide variety of assets, other than cash.

**Simplicity**. One gift can benefit numerous American Legion programs.

**Tax Advantage**. You’ll receive the maximum tax benefit from a gift to the South Dakota American Legion Foundation.

Donations can be made directly on the South Dakota Community Foundation’s website at: https://sdcommunityfoundation.org/for-donors/south-dakota-american-legion-foundation/.

Donations may also be mailed to:
South Dakota Community Foundation
1714 North Lincoln Ave Box 296 Pierre, SD 57501
or
South Dakota American Legion
c/o South Dakota American Legion
PO Box 67
Watterton, SD 57201

Help the Foundation with Purchases Made through AmazonSmile

Did you know you can support South Dakota American Legion programs just by doing your normal online shopping? Amazon has a charitable feature in which they donate money to your favorite charity that is a 501c3. The South Dakota American Legion Foundation is one of these charities. There is not an extra cost to the consumer for this donation — but the shopper MUST use the https://smile.amazon.com/ website. By shopping from https://smile.amazon.com/, 1% of your shopping will be donated to the Foundation IF you select the “South Dakota American Legion Foundation” as your charity. The Smile website is not compatible (yet) with the Amazon.com App on a smartphone, so you will have to either shop from your phone’s browser or on a computer to have the 1% donated.

With online shopping becoming more popular (and quite frankly, necessary with this pandemic), we hope you consider taking the extra step to support the South Dakota American Legion Foundation, and therefore, all of our great Legion programs.

Greetings Legionnaires,

This annual report is traditionally given orally at the Department Convention. The 2020 Convention, along with most other events, was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I will use this publication to present my report to you, my fellow Legionnaires.

Your SD American Legion Foundation was organized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit tax-exempt organization in 2010. It is professionally managed by the SD Community Foundation, where the principal remains in a permanent endowment. Distributions from the earnings are paid back to the Department of the American Legion to help fund the programs of the Legion. With this structure, the principal (corpus) will continue to grow and distributions will be received each year forever.

At the present level, approximately $8,200 can come back to support the programs of Helping Children and Veterans. This will increase as the fund grows.

Since the beginning, the funds have come from many sources including events such as the Fun Auctions and raffles and by donations from individuals, Legion Posts, organizations and businesses. In 2019 the Board of Directors set a lofty goal of increasing the fund balance to one million dollars, and to do it in five years. We have made definite progress. One year ago, the net assets were $161,740.17. Today it is just over $216,500.

Board members have called on many business leaders in this state and beyond, asking them to consider making a contribution. Many have met with success. A number of Legion Posts in SD, veterans and people in general have made very generous contributions. But now, this Covid-19 situation has really derailed the process. However, they don’t call us veterans for nothing. Just like the wars and challenges we have been involved in as individuals, we are optimistic that somehow this pandemic will eventually be a thing of the past.

To all the Posts, Legion Members, individuals and businesses that have contributed to the Foundation recently and over the years, we thank you very much! Some businesses are in a survival mode now, but not all. Some individuals are in a financial bind, but others are not. Some Legion Posts are struggling financially, but others are very sound. If your situation, or the present finances of your business or Legion Post is such that you could consider a donation that will last forever, we ask that you do it. We see memorials come regularly from Posts and individuals in memory of members or friends that have died. These all make a real difference.

Jim Kurtz, Garretson
By Danielle Konechne

It seems that, although we are more con- nected than we have ever been--with the internet, cell phones, social media, etc... we find it hard to authentically connect and build longstanding networks and relation- ships. Let's share how we've overcome this di- sconnect, and at times disconnect, of building connections and supportive networks. Allow me to start from the beginning. I have been in the Air Force Security Forces for over 15 years, which is hard for me to even wrap my head around. My career started out pretty humbly. I had a desk, a phone, no money, no prospects, and no idea what I was doing. You see, I came from Security Forces, which didn't require phenomenal communication or people skills. Rather, it required a chain of command, respect and boundaries. I would quickly learn, as I integrated into the civilian world, that things have changed since the military. There is no longer a chain of command, no respect, and developing the appropriate skills to build networks and connections began. Do I trust you? These were taboos words for me. As an introvert, I really did not enjoy the idea of "networking." Luckily, I had some of the greatest mentors who were always there for me. A few of them even told me why: Why would they help me, lift me, pour into me? But, eventually I would come to understand: You reap what you sow. For me, that is the one KEY to networking--sowing. Many will go into networking opportunities with their focus on rea- ping and benefiting from others. However, I believe networking is actually the oppo- site. Networking is going into any oppor- tunity or situation with a mission to help and/or support others. It's thinking "how can I add value?" Everyone has knowledge and skills that can add value. It's important to take the time and realize what gifts and skills you have-- and then share them. As you share your gifts with others, they will in return share theirs with you. Because, you reap what you sow.

Beyond phenomenal mentors, I also ex- tensively studied people and personalities. I am very curious as to why people are who they are. It absolutely fascinates me. Everyone has a story, and I find each and every one very intriguing. I read books, went to seminars, and took numerous courses on how to better understand people. The se- cret? The best way to truly connect with others is to simply LISTEN to them. Learning skills like those mentioned abo- ve to combat any struggles with connec- tions and networking is the best way to move forward. In addition to those, I use FORMING as a technique when connecting with people. There are a lot of versions of this, however, this is the one that stuck with me the most. The most important point to remember is that there is no better way to bless someone or honor someone than to genuinely listen and learn about them. Here is a how I use the FORMING techni- que:

F - Family
O - Occupation
R - Recreation
M - Message

How do you apply this? Well, it's simple and that's exactly why I like it. Just ask them about their family, and then LISTEN. Ask about their occupation, and then LISTEN. Ask what they like to do for fun/hobbies, and then LISTEN. Finally, relay whatever message you have to share with them.

My favorite thing about the veteran/mili- tary community is everyone has something in common: our service. If you are at a ser- vice oriented event, half the work is done! Just ask, “what branch were you in?” The ice is broken and the rest is easy. The best part? Because service members are gene- rally mission oriented, they make some of the best connections and will be great re- sources for you in the future. Attend that District meeting--Sow away, and everyone will reap the rewards.

Danielle Konechne is a successful realtor with Fisher Sisters Associates in Sioux Falls, an Air Force Security Forces veteran, and founding member of Post #425, an all-women American Legion Post in Sioux Falls.

Submit Stories for the Legion News

Greetings from the editor! The Legion News has been my baby for the last 2.5 years, and I’m so excited that we were finally able to give her an upgrade in design and get her out to you. I hope you enjoy, as it will be returning to a harder copy print in February 2021 for an experimental issue-run. Please provide feedback, and if you know of anyone interested in adver- tising, send them my way!

The South Dakota Legion News is al- ways accepting submissions, and with the new format, there’s a lot of room to tell our story. That said, we have the opportunity to revamped how we curate the paper, so here’s a few guide- lines on submitting a news story.

1. Focus your story/caption on one or more of the Four Pillars. Everything we do as a Post is part of our mission, let’s sell it that way!

2. Provide a quality picture. There’s nothing more frustrating than an interesting story with low quality or blurry images that I cannot put to print.

3. Include details, like first & last names, locations and dates.

4. Going forward, there will be a Post Spotlight (like Lily on the front page) and a Member Spotlight (Tom Saunders, opposite page). If your post would like to be considered, or you have a member you want honor, please send a short-write-up to select from. Thank you for your support in this, Courtney VanZanten

duosd@legion.org

Department Calendar

AUGUST 2020
4. Coast Guard Birthday
22. Boys State Board & Corporation Meetings, Aberdeen, SD

SEPTEMBER 2020
1. Last day for Preamble Poster Order
3-7. SD State Fair, Huron, SD
7. Labor Day, HQ Closed
12-13. SD American Legion Golf Tournament, Hartford, SD
18. Air Force Birthday
19. District 4 Fall Meeting, Akaska, 7:30pm
19. District 5 Fall Meeting, Susanston, 2:30pm
20. District 3 Fall Meeting, Hoven, 2pm
25. District 6 Fall Meeting, Arlington, 7pm
26. District 7 Fall Meeting, Dell Rapids, 2pm
27. District 8 Fall Meeting, Walonoka, 2pm

OCTOBER 2020
3. District 2 Fall Meeting, Rapid City, time TBD
4. District 1 Fall Meeting, Box Elder, 12:30pm
13. Navy Birthday

NOVEMBER 2020
10. Marine Corps Birthday
11. Veterans Day, HQ Closed
26. Thanksgiving Observed, HQ Closed
27. Thanksgiving Observed, HQ Closed

DECEMBER 2020
10. Sioux Falls VA Hospital Christmas Party
12. Hot Springs VA Hospital Christmas Party
13. National Guard Birthday
13. State Veterans Home Christmas Party
14. Ft Meade VA Hospital Christmas Party
20. Space Force Birthday
23-25. Christmas Observed, HQ Closed
25. Christmas, HQ Closed

JANUARY 2021
10. Posts to have completed Oratory Contest
16. Martin Luther King Jr Day, HQ Closed
31. Districts to have completed Oratory Contest

FEBRUARY 2021
15. Presidents Day, HQ Closed
19-21. MidWinter Conference, Arrowood Resort, Oacoma, SD

Reap What You Sow:
A Networking Guide for Veterans

By Danielle Konechne

It seems that, although we are more con- nected than we have ever been--with the internet, cell phones, social media, etc... we find it hard to authentically connect and build longstanding networks and relation- ships. Let's share how we've overcome this di- sconnect, and at times disconnect, of building connections and supportive networks. Allow me to start from the beginning. I have been in the Air Force Security Forces for over 15 years, which is hard for me to even wrap my head around. My career started out pretty humbly. I had a desk, a phone, no money, no prospects, and no idea what I was doing. You see, I came from Security Forces, which didn't require phenomenal communication or people skills. Rather, it required a chain of command, respect and boundaries. I would quickly learn, as I integrated into the civilian world, that things have changed since the military. There is no longer a chain of command, no respect, and developing the appropriate skills to build networks and connections began. Do I trust you? These were taboos words for me. As an introvert, I really did not enjoy the idea of "networking." Luckily, I had some of the greatest mentors who were always there for me. A few of them even told me why: Why would they help me, lift me, pour into me? But, eventually I would come to understand: You reap what you sow. For me, that is the one KEY to networking--sowing. Many will go into networking opportunities with their focus on rea- ping and benefiting from others. However, I believe networking is actually the oppo- site. Networking is going into any oppor- tunity or situation with a mission to help and/or support others. It's thinking "how can I add value?" Everyone has knowledge and skills that can add value. It's important to take the time and realize what gifts and skills you have-- and then share them. As you share your gifts with others, they will in return share theirs with you. Because, you reap what you sow.

Beyond phenomenal mentors, I also ex- tensively studied people and personalities. I am very curious as to why people are who they are. It absolutely fascinates me. Every- one has a story, and I find each and every one very intriguing. I read books, went to seminars, and took numerous courses on how to better understand people. The se- cret? The best way to truly connect with others is to simply LISTEN to them. Learning skills like those mentioned abo-ve to combat any struggles with connec- tions and networking is the best way to move forward. In addition to those, I use FORMING as a technique when connecting with people. There are a lot of versions of this, however, this is the one that stuck with me the most. The most important point to remember is that there is no better way to bless someone or honor someone than to genuinely listen and learn about them. Here is a how I use the FORMING techni- que:

F - Family
O - Occupation
R - Recreation
M - Message

How do you apply this? Well, it's simple and that's exactly why I like it. Just ask them about their family, and then LISTEN. Ask about their occupation, and then LISTEN. Ask what they like to do for fun/hobbies, and then LISTEN. Finally, relay whatever message you have to share with them.

My favorite thing about the veteran/mili- tary community is everyone has something in common: our service. If you are at a ser-vice oriented event, half the work is done! Just ask, “what branch were you in?” The ice is broken and the rest is easy. The best part? Because service members are gene- rally mission oriented, they make some of the best connections and will be great re- sources for you in the future. Attend that District meeting--Sow away, and everyone will reap the rewards.

Danielle Konechne is a successful realtor with Fisher Sisters Associates in Sioux Falls, an Air Force Security Forces veteran, and founding member of Post #425, an all-women American Legion Post in Sioux Falls.
Updated Preamble for Sale Through Department HQ

With the signing of the LEGION Act – Let Everyone Get Involved in Opportunities for National Service Act – into law July 30 by President Trump, the U.S. government now acknowledges that the military has been involved in at least 12 additional military conflicts not previously recognized. At the 2019 Fall Meetings in Indianapolis, the American Legion National Executive Committee adopted Resolution 1, which amends “the Great Wars” in the Preamble to “all wars.”

The Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion now reads:

For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:
To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;
To maintain law and order;
To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;
To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars;
To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;
To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;
To make right the master of might;
To promote peace and goodwill on earth;
To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;
To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

Department Headquarters has negotiated a deal to get new Preambles ordered that will measure 36” x 52.5” in either Portrait or landscape orientation (example below). Being poster material, the Preamble will need to be placed in a frame. Cost is $30 each.

Ordering has been extended until September 1, 2020. Delivery will be during the Fall meetings. Contact HQ at hq@sdlegion.org or call (605) 886-3604 to place an order.

Member Spotlight:

Tom Saunders, Stratford Post #207

Name: Tom Saunders
Post: Stratford Post #207
Military Service: US Army Air Corps WWII, Fire Control Gunner on a B-29
Civilian Occupation: FBI (retired), and VP for Dacotah Bank in Aberdeen.
Why Nominated: Tom returned to his home Legion Post in Stratford after he finished up his career at Dacotah Bank and jumped in with both feet. He was elected as Stratford Post 207 Commander and the Post revitalized under his leadership. Tom has also served as Post Historian, twice taking Runner-Up in the State competition. Other positions he has served in Post #207 include Adjutant, Chaplain, and his current position as Americanism Officer. Tom proudly attended the Second Annual SD Boys State in 1944 and continues to be a huge supporter of the program. He has been serving his Community, State and Nation for years.

Right: Tom Saunders stands for a surprise parade held in honor of his 95th birthday. Post #207 organized the parade with appearances by local fire and law enforcement to recognize Tom’s milestone and to thank him for his service.

South Dakota Legion Gear Available Through SignDesign

The South Dakota American Legion is utilizing the new department emblem to create brand awareness throughout the state, starting with a line of clothing offered through Sign Design of Colton, SD. South Dakota Sons gear is also available, and Auxiliary is in the works for emblem approval. Posts can request gear to be customized for their specific post—a great option for Honor Guards or Post Officers.

The line includes a variety of items: ballcaps, jackets, polo shirts, quarter zips, long and short sleeve dress shirts and t-shirts. Items can be purchased in multiple colors, with no minimum order required. Additionally, the T-shirts and jackets are available with the general American Legion emblem. Shipping is available.

Sign Design is owned and operated by Shane Lamer, an Army veteran and member of the Ruste-Wahl Post #154 of Montrose, SD. Lamer is excited to bring high-quality gear to the Department for this project, and welcomes suggestions for any future products. Find the store here:
americanlegion.signdesign1977.club

STATE LEGION GOLF Tournaments

4 PERSON SCRAMBLE
Saturday & Sunday
September 12th & 13th, 2020
Central Valley Golf Course, Hartford, SD

Registration Deadline: September 1st, 2020
Cost: $440 per team
Pre-Register with Fred Lee: 605-413-9451
Fry Drawing
Registration day of tournament:
9:30 AM - 10:45 AM
Start times: Saturday 12:00 PM & Sunday 9:00 AM

Sponsored by:
Humboldt Legion Post 62 & Hartford Legion Post 118
Knowing the skills of the local members who are available is a definite deciding factor on what you can accomplish.

The second step is outlining the steps needed to achieve this goals you have identified and assigning members who have those skills to make those steps contribute to the mission of the Post. During every program / event the Post puts on, the Post public affairs member should work with local media to ensure the community knows what you are doing and how it benefits them. The more the community knows of the Posts programs, the more support you will get in future ones, especially if it benefits them.

New Members

It is important to welcome new members into the Post. Taking their membership fee and not talking to them until next year does absolutely no benefit for the Post, especially if they live close. New members need to be invited to the next Post meeting, educated in the fact that the meeting is merely there for members to communicate about the Post programs, it is not what the Legion is about. Taking care of veterans, promoting positive Americanism programs with the local school and supporting the Four Pillars is what the Legion is about. Making sure veterans are visited whenever they need it, performing funeral honors, taking care of deployed members families; that goes on what we can do for us veterans. The important part is "make new members feel welcomed and needed," build a relationship with them as brothers and sisters who are veterans.

Redefine Revitalization

The past few years Post revitalizations have consisted of a team of Post, District and State officers sitting down and calling members to get that information to their memberships. This is a good practice for getting renewal in the Posts and is a short term fix. What Legion members should consider is the long term sustainability of their revitalizations. Training and education of new and existing members is something that gets neglected. The assumption that a member knows what the organization is all about is an incorrect assumption. This Legion News edition is a great resource to have members read to give them basic knowledge of the South Dakota American Legion Programs. Another resource is "Basic Training" through the www legion org training center which is free to American Legion members. Ignorance (just not knowing what the Legion is about) is one reason members do not renew; they just do not see the benefit to them or to veterans if they are a member. Education and training all members should be an active part of every solution to the struggles of renewal of membership.

Take Credit for Your Volunteerism

Have you given much thought to your involvement in the American Legion? Sure, you go to meetings, attend functions, and perform a wide variety of services for both veterans and your community. But, have you ever taken the time to reflect on the myriad of things you do? In the event that you would, you may be surprised at the value you bring to the table, and how that might actually translate into job marketability.

Our organization is made up of people, each one possessing a wide variety of talents and skills. Legionnaires all have military service in common, which already gives them a baseline of skills such as leadership, coping with stressful situations, dependability, teamwork, problem-solving, among many others. However, whether or not you’ve pondered it, your involvement in the Legion has been building upon your skill-set. Prospective employers are always looking for people who possess these skills, and clearly communicating them can give you a competitive edge over other job applicants.

Whether or not you’re in the market for a new job, it might be worthwhile to take some time to update your résumé. Including your volunteer work is a great way to set yourself apart from others, your Legion activities in particular. Employers recognize that people who volunteer are generous with their time, are generally hard workers, and have a desire to make a difference in their communities. When listing volunteer activities in your résumé, if the work you’ve performed relates directly to the job you’re applying for, it’s acceptable to include it in your work experience section. Otherwise, creating a Volunteer Activities section might be more logical. Either way, making sure you list any organizations you volunteer for, whether it’s a local legion, or other noteworthy accomplishments, so prospective employers can garner a broader understanding of all you have to offer as a candidate, and the additional hard or soft skills you possess as further evidenced through your volunteer activities.

Being a veteran is something to be proud of, and membership in the American Legion is an important way we can continue to maintain our connection with fellow veterans, and to serve others. Being a leader in the Legion demonstrates you have special abilities that could be very valuable to any organization. Don’t be afraid to take credit for your honorable service and contributions. It lets prospective employers know you have abilities which set you apart from the crowd, and just might help land you that next great job!
In the beginning, over 1,000 war weary World War I American Expeditionary Forces’ commissioned officers and enlisted servicemen, met in Paris, France, 15-17 March 1919, and birthed “The American Legion. It is the veterans, families, members, and communities through personal and governmental action. Each veteran's time and resources vary. However, each member adds voice strength as American Legion Leaders pursue local, state, and federal support. Membership numbers drove Congressional key legislation, i.e., consolidating separate agencies' veterans' programs under the Veterans Administration, GI Bill, P O W / M I A Accountability, Agent Orange, Blue Water Navy, Burn Pits, and 2019 American Legion Act to highlight a few actions.

Our Emblem's words, "American Legion," ties the whole together for truth, remembrance, constancy, honor, service, veteran's affairs and rehabilitation, children and yesth, loyalty, and Americanism." We've inherited a steadfast respected Legacy per synthesizing "The American Legion" principles and getting.

I challenge all Legionnaires to leave no Veteran or Service member behind. "Rejoin, Reunite, Rejuvenate" all to be part of The American Legion Family and perpetuate the American Legion Legacy for today's and tomorrow's veterans!

District Commander Updates

**David Booze, Piedmont**

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District Commander Updates

**Eugene IronShell, Jr., Rosebud**

I send greetings to the South Dakota American Legion Family from District 2. Hopefully you are all safe and well.

It makes me extremely proud to be a member of The American Legion when I see all the great things that posts all over the country are doing for their communities in spite of the pandemic challenges.

Congratulations to the posts in Murdo, St. Francis,uster and New Underwood for achieving 100% in membership. Remember that every Legionnaire is a recruiter. Reach out to your fellow Veterans and invite them to join our great organization.

I look forward to continuing on strengthening our membership in regards to the posts on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations. They comprise 40% of the posts in our district.

Finally, as we begin our 102nd year of service let us remember always to carry on the legacy and traditions that our grandfathers that fought in the Great War started for us.

The four pillars that we were founded on are as relevant in 2020 as the were in 1919.

For God and Country.

**Roger Madsen, Pierre**

"Dedicated to the service and sacrifice of those who served." W ords that I have said than done, with all that has been going on for the year 2020 and COVID-19. Like many of you with health issues, it would be nice to get to visit and see our Legion Family members, but safer not to.

Pierre Post #8 is tackling a large remodel project currently, replacing the logs in the 1940 log cabin. The Post is keeping with historical accuracy—the logs are coming from the Black Hills, just as they did when the post was built. Additionally, the paint currently on the building will be sandblasted off, returning all logs to their natural beauty.

With those Posts I have talked with, they haven't held any meetings and won't until this pandemic ends. Please take this time to reach out to the Veterans in your post, and see if there's anything you can do to assist. The virus has had a large impact on a lot of lives, and we need to do what we can to help each other.

We are tentatively planning the Fall District Meeting for September 26th, 2020 in Ho ven, SD. There will be a light lunch served at the Legion Hall at 1 pm, with the meeting starting at 2 pm.

However, with Gods help, all of us will get through this and return to our local post and do things we do best: help our communities and the young people.

Hello to all the Legion members of District 4 have had a tough time being held as scheduled, with many being postponed or cancelled. Looking forward to visiting with you at the Fall District Meeting to be held in the Akasu ka Community Center, Friday, September 18th. A Social will be at 6:00 PM, Meal at 6:30 PM and the Meeting at 7:30 PM.

There will be an election of Commander and Vice Commander for the District that was postponed from the Spring Meeting. Bob Thomason has agreed to Run for Commander, we still need someone to fill the Vice-Commander position. Please consider serving the District as our next Vice. You will find it to be a very rewarding experience.

Thank you for all the help and support the last two (+) years as your Commander.

**Matt Lagerstrom, White**

The advent of The Virus has been a challenging time for everyone, and for our organization which has a basis in being social, it has been especially difficult. Fortunately, our Posts are doing out good things every day for other people in order to further the mission of The American Legion. In the early part of The Virus' impact, Posts across the District set up "Buddy Checks" to assure their members had some way of getting food and getting to appointments. Around Memorial Day, our Posts were forced to reinvent their Memorial Day Observance, and the response from the communities we serve was heartwarming. If it was a simple Honor Guard at the Cemetery, or a more elaborate gathering at the Community Veterans Memorial our Posts and the communities they serve did their best to remember that the freedoms that we have enjoyed in the past were not easily won, and many people and their families had to endure much hardship to earn the ability to freely socialize with those that we cherish, to worship as we desire, and to pursue livelihoods which are not dictated by an oppressive government making decisions for us. As we move forward as an organization, we must always remember our founding ideal was as an organization which seeks to take care of Veterans, their families, and the communities which we live in. If the last few months have been any indication that is a mission which our Posts have not forgotten.

**Doug Feltman, Chamberlain**

We "The American Legion" know how important it is to have community support, without which we would not be as effective as we are. I think everyone would agree that The American Legion has very good community support in South Dakota. We need to be active in the community and let it be known that The American Legion is there for them also. We need to continue to get our name out there as much as we can and always express our appreciation for community support.

District 6 is utilizing various certificates of recognition. In The American Legion Catalog, you can order a certificate maker disc, which contains many printable certificates that can be presented to businesses and community members. This is an easy and cost effective way to get the Legion name out, and also let the people know that we appreciate what they do for us.

The acceptance and appreciation for these certificates has been great. If the Post does not have access to a computer or someone willing to take this project on, they can contact me and tell me what certificate they want and who it is to be presented to. As an example, the Plumknight Post contacted me for certificates for flying the US Flag. I printed 48 for them and mailed them to the Adjutant and he presented them. We have also presented a certificate for the bugler who played Taps at services and for a business that loaned us a public address system.

**LeRoy Madsen, Pierre**

The fuel that keeps The American Legion programs functioning is the volunteers who make them happen. Whether the volunteers are from the community or the Legion family it seems the help needed to make it work is there. The American Legion Auxiliary, Junior Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion and The Legion Riders provide many helpers in those post where they are active.

A few examples in District 7 are VA Hospital volunteers, drivers for the veterans to get to their appointments, help for those who need help around their home. Painting a house for a veteran or just making a call to see how they are getting along. Many posts present the colors at every sporting event and are available to talk to students about youth programs. Funeral Honors, to me, is the most important volunteer duty that we as a Legion family can provide for a fellow veteran.

Recognition of these VIPS is very important and takes on as many ways as there are post. Certificates of appreciation, thank you notes in the local paper, medals or challenge coins. Some of the volunteers are recognized at community picnics, pot luck-supper, wowo banquets and given the public recognition they deserve.

As volunteers we live the line from our Preamble ‘to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation.’ Thank you all for that you do.

**Rodney Smith, Chester**

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**Greg Geiman, Scotland**

It’s been an honor to serve as the District 8 Commander for the last three (and some change) years. Being able to travel from town to town, and making a lot of new friends along the way--its truly been an enjoyable experience. I highly recommend anybody interested to step up and take the job on September 27th.

As a District Commander, one of my duties was to visit local posts and check in on the post well-being. Seeing how other posts and Legionnaires do things, I was often able to go back to my home post with good ideas. It’s great to see so many posts doing important work in their communities.

One observation I’ve made over the years as District Commander: The programs of the American Legion are what really attract members, and an active post with active programs has a much better chance of retaining those members. Do what you can to be an active post—we’re all busy (I work 50 hours a week!), but you make time for what is important for the Veterans. As the old saying goes, if you want something done, ask the busy person.

The experience of District leadership is a rewarding one. I’ve made lifelong friends, seen every small town south of Parker and east of Platte, and have been inspired by the work of my fellow Veterans. Again, if you’ve never been interested, now is your chance to run.

For God and Country!
The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States are, you may be surprised to learn, theological documents. They define an understanding of government’s relationship to man firmly based upon a Judeo-Christian worldview. They were not hastily drafted to state their dependence upon the God of the Bible, and they acknowledged exactly that when they set quill to parchment, drafted our founding documents, and in set place the nation we are blessed to live in today. Grace & Peace,
Chaplain Justin Warfel