

STATE COMMANDERS ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGION MEMBERSHIP

Greetings Legion Family

I want to thank each and every Legion Family member for their support and confidence in me this past year. What a year it has been, it was the most rewarding experience I have ever had. To see what Posts from one end of the state to the other are doing for The Legion, veterans and their communities is amazing.

My term as Commander started on 19 June when I was sworn in. Then to Pierre for the Youth Trooper Academy, Parkston for the Viet Nam Traveling Memorial Wall, Milbank for the groundbreaking for the new baseball stadium, District Commander training, DEC meetings, Redfield baseball tournament where I was able to throw out the first pitch (and it even made it to home plate), Watertown for the SD Veterans Council meeting, my home coming, ALA President Smith's homecoming. I was also able to attend the Military Order of the Purple Heart banquet, DAV convention, tractor pulls, the Central Plains Regional baseball tournament, Bridge dedications, several membership nights, Post birthday celebrations, the Brown County Fair, the South Dakota State Fair, National Convention in Milwaukee, the Commanders conference in Washington DC, many city celebrations, The Legion Golf tournament, and Sons of The American Legion charter presentations. I traveled with the National Legion Auxiliary President and the Legion's National Commander when they visited South Dakota. The list goes on and on and to list all events would be way too long. I found it very hard to tell a Post, Unit, Squadron or Riders Chapter that I would not be able to attend their function because there were not enough days in the month to attend all of them.

However, the highlight of my term was when I was able to be on the South Dakota American Legion Honor Flight # 13 with my daughter Cindy, Unit # 15 Auxiliary member and my grandson Riley, Sons Squadron # 15 member. All three of us went as guardians and I know that we will never forget the humbling experience of getting to know our "veterans" and being a part of a very moving experience for them. Thanks to every member of the Legion family for working so hard in raising money so the flight could be named "The American Legion Honor Flight #13". Until you have been part of the flight you cannot imagine what it means to those veterans.

There is not another group of people as dedicated and committed to helping our veterans and strengthening our communities than the Legion family. Every day across South Dakota the "Legion family" is upholding our four pillars, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism and Children and youth. I am extremely proud to have been your Commander this year and I can honestly say it went by too fast. I will end by asking that you give the next Department Commander the same support and commitment that you gave me to make The American Legion a better and stronger organization for our country, our veterans and our communities.

A very heartfelt THANK YOU to Adjutant Hempel, Judy and MaryJo for all of the help you gave me and for the way you keep Headquarters on an even keel and running smoothly. Also, a special thank you to the Vice Commanders and the District Commanders. Their support and dedication was greatly appreciated.

Thank you for trusting in me to be your Commander. And thank you for what you do for The American Legion.

God bless you, God bless America and God bless The American Legion.

Doug Feltman
Department Commander
2022-2023

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

Department Commander Feltman,

This report is being written to satisfy the Constitution and By Laws requirement for the Department Adjutant to write and present to the annual convention, a report covering activities not covered in the annual reports of the Committee and Commission Chairs and other Department officials.

All fall and spring District conventions were held this year, but weather forced the changing of original meeting dates for three of the district meetings. Most committees have met as required, some face to face, others by Zoom. A number of committees have held additional meetings by Zoom as a way to conduct additional business.

I feel the Department should take a hard look at our methodology for working on membership. Our membership numbers continue to decline, and we must find ways to entice younger members to join our organization as well as keep current members.

The Department continues to be a member of the South Dakota Veterans Council (SDVC) and was key to making their Legislative reception successful in January. The event was hosted at the Pierre Post home and was well received. I believe the SDVC will ask the Legion to host it again in 2024.

As decided by the Department Executive Committee, the Department went to an all-digital format for the South Dakota American Legion News. We have received feedback from a number of Legionnaires saying they would like to see some kind of paper be distributed. A subcommittee has been assigned the task of examining methods to continue to communicate with our Legionnaires and I think that will be important for the future membership health.

This year, the Department decided to conduct the MidWinter sweepstakes in-house. A local printing company did the printing and mailing with volunteers doing the stuffing and sealing of the envelopes. The sweepstakes were very successful, and the decision was made to do the same for the convention sweepstakes. It remains to be seen how successful this one will be. A special thanks to all the volunteers that helped. One item learned from the MidWinter event is it takes more volunteers to get the job done in a single day.

The headquarters staff consists of the Department Adjutant, Judy Greenfield and MaryJo Boner. The Department Service Officer is currently an appointed, non-paid position currently held by Courtney Steffen. Judy and MaryJo continue to be the backbone of the office and many of the Department's programs and this office could not operate without them.

Lastly, family issues have led me to submit my resignation to the Department Executive Committee in February. I have enjoyed my time as the Department Adjutant and want to ensure a good turnover with the incoming Adjutant. A hiring committee appointed by Commander Feltman interviewed four individuals for the position and selected Christopher "Van" Van Delist as the new adjutant. He will officially join the Department in May and will assume the duties sometime in June once a formal turnover is complete. I wish him and the Department only the best of luck.

Since most of the committee/commission chairs and other Department Officers have submitted their reports which are available for review, this concludes my report.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Hempel
Department Adjutant

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN REPORT

Commander,

The year is really going fast and I'm enjoying being your National Executive Committeeman. At the Spring District Meetings this year, I've been discussing the issues that The American Legion has put forth as their priorities for the upcoming year. At the American Legion Legislative Conference in Washington D.C., we discussed the issues and Legionnaires from all over the country went to Capitol Hill Tuesday and discussed these issues with their congressional delegation. Wednesday morning, I had the honor of attending the National Commander's testimony before the joint Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee. The National Commander did an excellent job representing The American Legion. **The legislative priorities for the upcoming year are Mental Health & Suicide Prevention, VA Healthcare Modernization, Implementation and Oversight of the Pact Act, Protect Veterans from Predatory Actors, Concurrent Receipt, Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity, GI Bill for Honorable Service, support our Afghan Allies, Military Quality of Life, Pay the Coast Guard and Protect the American Flag.**

The National Commander's program this year is the Veterans & Children Foundation. This foundation is used to fund the training for over 3,000 American Legion Service Officers. The American Legion service officers secured an estimated \$14.25 billion in disability compensation and other benefits to veterans in 2020 alone. Also, funds are used for the temporary financial assistance program for veterans that are in need that have minor children at home. Funds from this fund have come into South Dakota to help veterans in our state who really needed help. The goal for South Dakota is \$30,728.26. To build this endowed fund up, all departments were asked to give 25 cents a year per member for six years or \$1.50. We have a little over 2 years left to make our goal and presently we are a little over halfway there. Please, if your Post is able, give a dollar per member to this fund. Send your Post donation to State Headquarters, National Headquarters, or the National Commander when he comes into the state.

Don't forget the Buddy Check Program. "Be the One" to prevent a veteran from committing suicide. I would like to close by saying thank you and your post for all you do for the American Legion. No matter how big or small, anything you do makes a difference.

NEC Denny Brenden

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN

The year started out with the Department Commander's Homecoming celebration in DeSmet South Dakota on June 23. On June 24 I attended the ALA President's Homecoming celebration in Chester South Dakota.

August 10th attended the Viet Nam Veterans Pinning Ceremony at the Kingsbury County Courthouse and gave the Benediction. On August 15th attended Madison Post 25's Pic-Nic at Lake Madison and offered Grace. August 16, attended the Sioux Falls Post 15 Pig Roast. August 26 thru 29 attended the American Legion National Convention in Milwaukee Wisconsin.

On Labor Day I gave the Invocation for the DAV 727 Poker Run which raised over \$42,000.00 for the transportation of Veterans to their appointments.

On September 22 I attended the visitation service for Roger Kipp, Korean War Vet, at the Montrose American Legion Post.

On September 26 I attended the visitation service for Harry Jones, Korean War Vet, at Rudes Funeral Home in Brookings

Attended all of the Fall District meetings with the exception of District 4, starting in September and running thru October. September 30 attended the Department of South Dakota American Legion Honor Flight Banquet held in Sioux Falls at the convention center.

On October 1 attended the Department of South Dakota American Legion Honor Flight homecoming at the Sioux Falls convention center. Attended the Brookings County meeting.

November 9th attended Gov. Noem's tribute to the veterans in Sioux Falls. I sent out 1 condolence card and 2 get well cards. Attended the Brookings County meeting.

In December I sent out 2 get well cards and 4 Condolence cards.

In January I sent out 5 get well cards and 3 Condolence cards. Attended the Lasagna dinner at the DeSmet post. Attended the presentation of the SAL charter at the Bruce post. Attended the Pine Wood derby with Cub Scout Den 24 and Boy Scout Troop 13. Attended the visitation for John Foster, 77 year member of the Legion, WWII veteran.

In February I was successful in obtaining a Proclamation from the Governor proclaiming February 3 as Four Chaplains Day, the 80th anniversary of the sinking of the USS Dorchester. I was successful in obtaining a Proclamation from the Mayor of the city of Aurora proclaiming February 4 as Four Chaplains Sunday. I attended the Mid-Winter conference in Huron and officiated the Four Chaplains ceremony at the conference. I officiated the Four Chaplain ceremony at the Aurora Post 230 on Four Chaplains Sunday.

In March I attended the meetings in Districts 1, 2 and 5. I attended two Fish Frys at the Melrose Post and one Fish Fry at the Rapid City Post 22. I sent out 3 condolence cards.

In April I attended the Rocky Mountain Oyster Feed at Arlington Post 42. I attended the meetings in Districts 6, 7 and 8. I attended the first SD American Legion College.

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas Henley

Chaplain, Dept. of South Dakota American Legion

DEPARTMENT HISTORIAN REPORT

Commander Feltman,

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve and continue to serve as your Department Historian. I am working on the Department History for the year so you will have a remembrance of your year as Department Commander. I will also assist those who are working to put their histories together for the State Convention this year.

Post Historians should be working on their Post Histories right now for the History contest at our State Convention in Oacoma. Winners in each category (scrapbook and narrative) can be entered into the National contest. These entries should cover the past years' term of your Post Commanders election to the end of his or her term.

All the information on guidance and points sheets used in judging History books entered in the contest can be found in the Officers Guide.

Our History Book contest is patterned after the national contest, using the point system in judging the winners in each category. The rules were put together to make the history books better, ie. page numbers, id pictures, chronological structure, 3x5 card identifying author, table of contents, etc. The rules are available to everyone in the Officers Guide. On the points sheet, it only gives the general topic with details in the written area of the guide before the score sheet. The intent of the score sheet is to make history books look better.

Certificates will be presented to the first, second and third place winners at our State Convention.

I encourage all post historians to put together a post history. Your Post members will appreciate your hard work in the years to come. I thank all Post historians for their hard work and commitment in preparing these reports.

All Post Histories must be turned in by Friday, June 9th by 1 pm at the Registration Desk. If you can get them to me sooner, that would be great.

Respectfully submitted,

Fred Lee

Department Historian

DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER REPORT

Mr. Commander,

I would like to thank Commander Doug Feltman for appointing me to serve as Department Service Officer for 2022-2023.

As Department Service Officer, I have the unique privilege of directly serving Veterans and their families in helping them obtain and utilize the benefits they have earned through service to our country. The VA is undoubtedly its own mountain to climb, and I am happy to be a guide of sorts.

It has been a big year for benefits in the VA world. In August 2022 the PACT Act was passed, a sweeping piece of legislation that covers multiple generations of Veterans. For Gulf War-era and Post 9/11 Veterans who served in the Middle East or the airspace above, the following cancers and illnesses are now presumptive: Brain cancer, Gastrointestinal cancer of any type, Glioblastoma, Head cancer of any type, Kidney cancer, Lymphatic cancer of any type, Lymphoma of any type, Melanoma, Neck cancer of any type, Pancreatic cancer, Reproductive cancer of any type, Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type, Asthma that was diagnosed after service, Chronic bronchitis, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), Chronic rhinitis, Chronic sinusitis, Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis, Emphysema, Granulomatous disease, Interstitial lung disease (ILD), Pleuritis, Pulmonary fibrosis, and Sarcoidosis.

For Vietnam Veterans, the presumptive list for Agent Orange exposure now includes MGUS (blood disease) and Hypertension. Additionally, the PACT Act expanded the presumptive locations to include Any U.S. or Royal Thai military base in Thailand from January 9, 1962, through June 30, 1976; Laos from December 1, 1965, through September 30, 1969; Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham Province from April 16, 1969, through April 30, 1969; Guam or American Samoa or in the territorial waters off of Guam or American Samoa from January 9, 1962, through July 30, 1980; and Johnston Atoll or on a ship that called at Johnston Atoll from January 1, 1972, through September 30, 1977.

On January 17, 2023, funding starting for the COMPACT Act, a bill that passed in 2020 that allows Veterans in suicidal crisis to go to any health care facility, at VA or in the community, for free emergency health care regardless of their enrollment in the VA system. This is a huge benefit and will help in our fight against Veteran Suicide.

I am thrilled to report that State, County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers around South Dakota utilizing the American Legion Power of Attorney have secured \$42,545,265 in VA benefits for South Dakota Veterans and their families in Fiscal Year 2022. If you have not thanked your local Veterans Service Officer lately, please do so!

Respectfully Submitted,
Courtney Steffen
Department Service Officer

AMERICANISM COMMISSION CHAIRMAN ANNUAL REPORT

Commander,

I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve as your South Dakota American Legion Americanism Chairman. I attended the National Americanism Conference in Indianapolis in September. State representatives shared their successes and concerns.

The American Legion Scholarship Program – An Oratorical contest (open to students grades 9 thru 12 enrolled in public, parochial, military, private or state accredited home school) started at the Post level in December. High school students throughout the state prepared speeches based on the United States of America Constitution in a friendly cordial competition. Thank you also to the members of the Americanism Commission, District Americanism Chairmen and the entire American Legion family helping. The assistance of well-versed Legionnaires is always helpful.

Five Districts were represented in the Department Oratorical Contest. Thank you, Huron American Legion Post and District #6 for coordinating most of the personnel needs for the Department finals at Crossroads on February 12th during the Midwinter Conference. Some schools do not include the American Legion Oratorical program in their curriculum. I encourage Legionnaires in those to look to individuals or organizations to sponsor a local contest. Potential contacts might be a librarian, a minister, an attorney, a toastmaster's club, or a "Dale Carnegie" group.

Americanism programs are a very public opportunity for the American Legion. We touch the lives of families through youth. Our programs encourage young people to learn more about our form of government. Americanism is one of the 4 basis pillars of The American Legion. It is centered in patriotism.

The American Legion Americanism program represents much of what Posts do in their communities such as sponsoring Boys Scout Troops, sponsoring Shooting Sports programs, sponsoring American Legion Baseball teams, supporting a statewide Youth Trooper Academy, teaching flag etiquette, conducting Oratorical contests, sponsoring Boys State delegates, Memorial Day programs, Veteran's Day program, flag disposal ceremonies, sponsoring a color guard to lead parades and providing an honor guard at a veteran's funeral. We encourage citizens to vote in elections.

As you prepare your Post annual Americanism report, prepare your program goals for next year. Contact your school officials this spring and schedule appointments on the school calendar for next year (teachers' reception, oratorical competition, classroom flag etiquette presentations).

Thank you, Commander Feltman for giving me the opportunity to represent the Department of South Dakota as Americanism Chairman. Thank you to the Americanism Commission and the South Dakota members of the National Americanism Council for their direction and support.

Respectfully submitted,

Larry Madsen,

Americanism Commission Chairman

ATHLETIC COMMISSION CHAIRMAN REPORT

My report begins with the start of the 2023 baseball season. Jan 1st begins the start of a new baseball season with all teams completing registration by May 15th. Hopefully we will have another successful season as we did last year with a record number of teams being registered in 2022.

Tournament sites for 2023 are as follows: State A Sr Tournament to be held in Yankton from July 25th thru July 29th; St B Sr Tournament to be held in Redfield from July 28th thru Aug 1st; St A Jr Tournament to be held in Harrisburg from July 27th thru July 30th and the St B Jr Tournament to be held in Lennox from Aug 4th thru Aug 6th. This years' Golf Tournament will be hosted by Hermosa at 2 different locations in the Rapid City area. Everything is all arranged and looks to be on schedule.

On Jan 29th of this year, we made selections for the 2024 tournament host sites. They are as follows: St A Sr will be hosted in Mitchell; St B Sr will be hosted in Salem; St A Jr will be hosted in Pierre and the St B Jr will be hosted in Groton. No selection for the Golf tournament yet for next year. If interested in hosting the Golf tournament, please contact Elton Blemaster or Gene Gillen.

Just a note on hosting any of our tournaments. We need our Posts to get involved with our parent groups when hosting any of our tournaments. Last year we had 2 tournament sites that the Posts would not sign contracts for hosting the tournaments. Reasons for not signing were, did not know we were hosting a tournament, worried about insurance liabilities or worried about their financial obligations. To address some of concerns: when a team purchases their team's insurance, a \$2 million liability is included with your team's accidental insurance, that should cover any issues that might occur. As far as financial concerns, in my 20 years of running this program a post has never lost a dime, in fact last year one of the Posts not wanting to sign a contract lost out on a percentage of a \$13,000 net gate that the parent group took in and I think would have been willing to share with the post, at some percentage, with a little support. Please get involved or get your Sons of A.L. involved if you have one, if not this would be a great reason to get one started.

What's new for 2023? We were supposedly changing our branding label, which meant new uniform patch or logos. We were supposedly getting new baseball patches for all our uniforms that would have been required by 2024. But that has changed again because of the limited supply of the new patches available. So, for teams purchasing new uniforms this year you will once again be required to use our already existing patch until further notice. I think this will solve our current Branding issue until further notice and further research can be completed.

One more thing to bring up is that the SDHSAA is considering sanctioning baseball as a High School sport. As of now, nothing is confirmed yet, but it is coming. My only concern is that we don't want them to extend that season into June. That would totally ruin our season and program. Currently their tournaments end on Memorial Day weekend which works great with our program, and I do support. For years they have done it that way and it has been working just fine. I think they are pushing for a bit longer season as I also would have liked to start our season in May instead of June like we currently do. I am scheduled to meet with the SDHSAA after the Basketball season. Please let your AD know that we support their program, but it cannot go into June for their tournament play. Thank You!

Commander Feltman that concludes my mid-winter report and on behalf of the Athletic Commission, I would like to thank you for all your help and support by letting us serve on the Commission.

Sincerely,
Dan Sudbeck, Chairman

BOYS STATE DIRECTOR ANNUAL REPORT

Commander,

It is with great pleasure I can report we are a GO for the 80th Session of South Dakota American Legion Boys State, May 29 – June 2, 2023, at Northern State University. We currently have 168 boys signed up, we are down over 100 registrations at this time from 2019 but at sustained level from 2022. Again, this year we decided to include seniors in the session to allow them an opportunity. We will hold our annual meeting for the corporation the Sunday before Boys State May 28th at Northern State University. Some agenda items are future incorporation of Seniors, Changes to the Bylaws to change annual meeting date, 2024 Session Dates, and election of officers including a new Director and Registrar. I would like to thank every Legionnaire for their continued support of this great program. Additionally, I thank all the volunteers who come together to put on such an important event. Without all their dedication we could not fulfil our mission to help America's youth understand and appreciate the American system of government and way of life including the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and to give young men a better knowledge of the fundamental principles of South Dakota State government.

Respectfully submitted,

C.P. Van Delist, Director

South Dakota American Legion Boys State

CHILDREN AND YOUTH CHAIRMAN ANNUAL REPORT

Commander Feltman,

The South Dakota American Legion C&Y (Children and Youth) program this past year was a quiet one but a rewarding one. Thank you for selecting me as the Children and Youth Chairman for the Department of South Dakota. Your leadership and willingness to direct my efforts for the year were greatly appreciated.

In the past several years, the C&Y program within SD has worked closely with the Dollar Tree Program, in association with Operation Homefront. This last year, the South Dakota National Guard, took the primary lead on collecting and distributing donations of school supplies for helping those young Veterans families with children at home. The same process was repeated in early December as the Dollar Tree once again collected donations of small toys for distribution to Veterans families. There were a few Dollar Tree stores that did not have a National Guard Armory associated to it to make the donation pickups so local Legion Posts were able to pick up those donations and distribute them within their local communities. In December, with the help of the Brookings and Sisseton Posts, I was also able to pick up donations from 2 other Dollar trees, package gifts into 20 gift bags, and deliver them to the VA in Sioux Falls for distribution to Veterans with children. This is a great program that I hope the American Legion will continue to be a part of.

Additionally, Operation Homefront donated backpacks full of school supplies to Air Force personnel with children at Ellsworth AFB. Around 15 Legion, Auxiliary, SAL and Legion Rider members from Districts one and two, on short notice, volunteered to help distribute 340 of these backpacks on July 30th. It was great to see so many step up to help make this event such a success.

Operation Homefront will continue to offer the school supply, backpack, and toy programs in the coming years. On a side note, through my interaction with Operation Homefront with the Backpack distribution and Dollar tree programs, I have been asked to become a member of the Operation Homefront Advisory Council, to represent the State of South Dakota in the upper Midwest region. I hope to continue to work with future C&Y Chairman of the American Legion, Department of South Dakota, on many more collaboration projects together between the two organizations.

A program that I wanted to promote this year as the C&Y Chairman was a donation fund raiser with proceeds to be split between the Children's Miracle Network (CMN) of South Dakota and youth programs in the South Dakota American Legion, which includes TFA.

Children's Miracle Network helps South Dakota families with sick or injured children with:

- Specialized equipment needs for the Sanford Children's Hospital
- Child Life Specialists to help teach our children about their illness
- Travel assistance, Food Vouchers, Lodging

Veterans with children at home can file for **TFA** (Temporary Financial Assistance), in times of need to help cover some the immediate needs of the Veterans family. Veterans can apply for assistance through their **local American Legion Post**.

Early in the year, there was a request to use the TFA program, however at the time, the criteria for using the program were not met because of the situation at the time. Unknow to me, there was an update to eligibility for TFA in the past year that could have been explored. The American Legion passed Resolution No. 5 (May 2022) Titled: Policy and Procedures of the Temporary Financial Assistance Grant Program. The policy clearly states that the minor child must be living full-time in the home of a qualifying veteran or service member. (I have attached a link to the resolution here. <https://archive.legion.org/node/7887>.) Yes, the veteran (grandparent) could qualify for TFA if the minor child(ren) is living in the veteran's home full-time and is under the veteran's legal guardianship or has been adopted by the veteran. The minor child qualifies if they fall into one of the below categories.

If the child is:

- a biological child of the veteran or service member.
- a child legally adopted by the veteran or service member,
- a stepchild by marriage of the veteran or service member

a child who is under the legal guardian ship of a veteran or service member.

Posts, Units, SAL or Rider groups that have or are still collecting funds for the Children Miracle Network/State Youth Activity fund, please memo your check as CMN/C&Y and either mail them to state HQ or present them at the State Convention this year. Once a total of donations is determined a check will be presented to CMN of SD later this summer.

Again, I wanted to thank you for selecting me as your state C&Y Chairman for the 2022-2023 Legion year. It has been a great year working with you. Thank you for your direction and mentorship. I wish you all the best in the coming years!!

Respectfully Submitted,
Harry Boner, Chairman

EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT

Mr. Commander,

Two thousand twenty-two/twenty-three was a lackluster period for the Educational Scholarship Committee. In 2019, we changed from a loan concept to a scholarship format investing \$120,000.00 with the South Dakota Community Foundation.

Our beginning fund balance (1/1/2022) was \$145,496.84 and ending fund balance (12/31/2022) was \$123,309.68. A loss of \$22,187.16. In the account at State HQ, we have \$20,239.51.

We received zero donations in 2022.

Five applications were received for this year's scholarships. Recipients will be announced in an upcoming *Up To Now*.

Applications and brochures are online at www.SDlegion.org. We are currently revising the application for 2023/24 scholarship year.

The 2023 Educator of the Year packets were due May 1, 2023. Because the deadline for this article was April 28, 2023, the committee did not have time to review the packets. The winner will be announced at the state convention and *Up To Now*.

The education scholarships offered by the Department of South Dakota are for children of veterans, grandchildren of veterans, and veterans who meet the requirements as set forth in the Education Scholarship brochure attending post-secondary education, college, or technical schools. Please read the brochure for all the current changes. In all cases, the veteran listed on the application must be a member of the South Dakota The American Legion. The student must attend a higher education school in the state of South Dakota unless their plan of study is not taught in a South Dakota school. The fund is self-sustaining through donations.

Annually, the brochure and application processes are reviewed. No monies were added to the fund from the Department's outside income programs. More specific details can be obtained from State Headquarters, your District Education Loan Chairperson, or a member of the state Education Scholarship Committee. The state committee consists of Michael Pauling, Piedmont, Philip Egeberg, Brookings, and Hugh Holmes, Mitchell.

Mr. Commander, thank you for selecting me as chairman of the prestigious Education Scholarship Committee. It is a great honor. Charlie Brown did win one game in his cartoon career!

Respectfully Submitted,

Hugh W. Holmes

Chairman, Education Scholarship Committee

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ANNUAL REPORT

Commander,

It has been an honor to serve this past year as the Chair of the Employment Committee, and to provide this report on their behalf. Recognizing organizations that provide opportunities for our fellow veterans is an important part of who we are as a Legion. This is particularly true regarding employers.

As Legionnaires, we have a responsibility to advocate the employment and retention of veterans. Here in South Dakota, we are fortunate to have many great employers, who recognize that veterans bring unique skills to the workforce, have received quality training throughout their time in the military, and typically demonstrate outstanding leadership abilities. A strong work ethic comes naturally to them, and they possess integrity and discipline - characteristics and values that seem to be in short supply these days, yet are common among veterans. Employers who are a head above the others recognize these qualities, and go the extra mile to recruit veterans that exhibit these traits. The annual Employment Awards showcase some of the great organizations that support veterans, and enable us to recognize them for their contributions.

For 2021-2022, we received 2 nominations in 2 categories: Spearfish Post #164 nominated the Spearfish Emergency Ambulance Service (SEAC) in the the *Employer of Veterans - Small* category, and Birch-Ward Post #9 nominated the Big Stone Power Plant in the *Employer of Veterans - Medium* category. SEAC was a unique nominee, as they were nominated last year, and were selected as the department recipient in the same category. However, an administrative oversight at the national level denied them an opportunity to compete for the national award. The committee felt it was only right that they receive a fair shot at the national board. Both nominations were outstanding, were non-competitively selected for the department award in their respective categories, and submitted for consideration at the national board. We were elated to learn that the Spearfish Emergency Ambulance Service was selected as the national runner-up in the Employer of Veterans - Small category. We are extremely happy for them, and very proud to have two great South Dakota organizations representing us at a national level.

This year's Employment Committee was composed of the following members: Oz Enderby of Lead-Deadwood, Rick Gully of Watertown, Doug Henwood of Spearfish, and Patrick Steele of Aberdeen. This is the 4th consecutive year each committee member volunteered to serve, and I would like to thank each of the members for their contributions.

As I have in the past, I would like to ask again for the assistance of all posts to look closely at deserving organizations in their area. We received two great nominations this year, but there are so many other great employers in our great state. Please take the time to recognize them for their contributions. I am happy to assist posts in preparing nomination packages. Thank you for your help in this important endeavor.

Respectfully submitted,
Gregory K. Dias
Employment Committee Chair

SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN LEGION FOUNDATION REPORT

Your South Dakota American Legion Foundation began in 2010, because of the foresight of our leaders at the time, in believing that it is important to have a steady source of revenue to help support the many valuable programs of the American Legion. It is structured as a 501(C)(3) non-profit corporation, so that the donations to it can be tax deductible for the donor. The funds are professionally managed by the South Dakota Community Foundation. As they accumulate, the donations to the Foundation go into an endowed fund that is invested. It is the return on these investments that becomes available to the SD American Legion to support the programs. In this way, the endowed fund itself is not depleted, and the returns on the investments will continue forever.

The Foundation works! The present balance is approximately \$275,000. Approximately \$10,000 per year is available back to the Legion for its programs. In recent years, Grants have been made to the following: The SD American Legion's Children and Youth program; SD Boys State; Midwest Honor Flight; The SD American Legion's Youth Trooper Academy program; and The National Veterans and Children's Fund. At the present time, funds are available for more granting.

Donations can be in many forms such as: outright gifts of cash or property; bequests through your estate by naming the SD AL Foundation in your will; memorials in memory of friends and fellow veterans and Legion members who have passed on so that their legacy will continue to live forever; naming the SD AL Foundation as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy so it will pay out upon your death; as an IRS approved "IRA Charitable Rollover Gift" so that your distribution is paid directly to the Foundation, rather than become taxable income to you. All of these gifts help assure that the American Legion programs that you care about will continue to be supported forever. Gifts of \$10,000 or more by an individual, entitle the donor to name the specific Legion program that he/she wishes to support. Please let the Foundation know if you would like assistance in structuring a donation.

Thank you to all of the individuals, Legion Posts, veterans' organizations (within and outside of the Legion Family) and businesses who have made donations to the Foundation! Many Posts and individuals regularly give memorials to honor friends, fellow veterans and Legion members who have passed on. If your Post is one of those, thank you very much! If not, please consider it as a way to ensure that their legacy will continue to live on forever. Many Posts have made significant donations to the Foundation. Thank you very much! If it has been some time since your Post has donated to the Foundation, please discuss the possibility of a donation to the Foundation with your membership. Your contribution will assist the S.D. American Legion forever. Thank you for your consideration!

We also want to thank you for your participation in Foundation fund raising activities. Over the years we have had several raffles that have been well supported and important income sources. Thank you for purchasing tickets, and congratulations to the winners! Following the Department Convention, we plan to kick off a new raffle that we feel will have prizes of broad interest to all, at a modest ticket price. More details to come. Another important fund raiser has been the Fun Auction held at the Department Convention each June. We thank those who donate the items, and those who bid on and purchase the items. Thank you to all! It really is a fun event, with quality items offered for sale! Thank you for donating the quality items, for without them, this event would not happen. Please plan to join in the fun coming up in June!

The Foundation Board members serve staggered terms at the appointment of the Department Commander. Thank you, Mr. Commander, for the privilege to serve!

By: James N. Kurtz, Board President

INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION CHAIRMAN REPORT

As this year's Chairman of the Internal Affairs (IA) Commission, I would, first of all, like to thank Commander Feltman for appointing me. The Internal Affairs Commission is very instrumental in guiding the internal operation of the SD American Legion. In addition, the Commission has purview of the Sons of the American Legion and the American Legion Riders. Members include Chairman Callies, along with members PDC Hanson, PDC Jurgens, and PDC Weinmann, along with ad hoc members Adjutant Hempel and Judge Advocate Leibel.

The IA Commission met via Zoom on May 4, 2023, at 1900 hours, with all members present. Guests included Alternate NEC Nelson representing the American Legion Riders and Casey Hanson, representing the Sons of the American Legion.

Commander Feltman thanked the members of the Commission for being active members and for participating in the Zoom meeting. Chairman Callies informed the group that there is no written job description for the Commission and he and the Adjutant will be working together to propose a job description.

SAL Commander Hanson gave a short report on the SAL. He is very happy as to the events of the year and reported that there are 41 active squadrons in the Department and has a membership of 1,534, 112% of the Department's goal.

Alternate NEC Nelson gave a very informative report on the American Legion Riders and their activities in the State. He reported that there are normally two meetings of the ALR during the year, one at midwinter and one at Department Convention. This year, rather than at the convention, the Riders will hold their meeting in Pierre the weekend before Memorial Day. This is in conjunction with the Third Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Soldiers and Sailors War Monument.

Four resolutions were submitted to Department headquarters and reviewed by the Commission as listed below:

Resolution no: SDAL 23-1, Submitted by: Chamberlain Post #3
Subject: Selection of the Department Legionnaire of the Year

Resolution no: SDAL 23-2, Submitted by: Clay Kiser Post 92 of Redfield
Subject: South Dakota American Legion EMT of the Year Award

Resolution no.: SDAL 23-3, Submitted by: Chester Post 136
Subject: Changes to 38 Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 1, Part 38 Section 38.630(2) Burial Headstones and Markers; Medallions

Resolution no.: SDAL 23-4, Submitted by: Chester Post 136
Subject: Changes to rating requirements for Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 4.101 Diagnostic code 7101, Hypertension

Because all resolutions reviewed did not impact the Department Constitution and By Laws, all were recommended to be passed to the Convention Resolutions Committee for action.

Byron Callies
Internal Affairs Chairman

AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS REPORT

Commander Feltman and the Department Internal Affairs Commission,

Serving as the Department Commander's "American Legion Riders Liaison" has been an honor this past year. The American Legion Riders are one of the most visible and popular programs of the American Legion. The chapters of the American Legion Riders' strength come from their efforts at the post level, where its members manage the chapters. The uniqueness of this program resides in its membership, which includes Legionnaires, Auxiliary, and Sons of the American Legion.

The American Legion Riders guide their activities around the American Legion Four Pillars: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation; National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

Chapters support the first pillar, **Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation**. The Chapters provide final respects to Veterans with escorts and flag lines at funeral homes, churches, and cemeteries, many at the Black Hills National Cemetery. Chapters reported participating in homecoming parades, parades of lights, Fourth of July, and city parades. Four times a year at the Black Hills National Cemetery, American Legion Riders join other veteran organizations and supporters in helping to provide unaccompanied veterans an honorable service.

Chapters supported veterans in VA facilities through programs such as Christmas in July, National Salute to Veterans Week, Veterans' Day, the Four Chaplains Memorial Service, Valentine's Day, Christmas Gift Shop, parties, bingo, and ice cream socials, to name a few.

Chapters support Veterans in the community by conducting Veterans Day programs, a poker run for Suicide Awareness, socials and picnics, decorating veterans' graves for Memorial Day, placing Holiday Remembrance Wreaths and helping with Wreath Across America at the Black Hills National Cemetery and State Veterans Cemetery in Sioux Falls. The Riders also help preparing the "Avenue of Flags" at the Black Hills National Cemetery. In addition, they lead the Black Hills State University Jacket Ride that raises funds for veterans' scholarships.

To support the second pillar, **National Security**, one of the main focuses is to promote full accountability of the POW/MIAs through community and youth awareness. The chapters reported performing several POW/MIA Ceremonies of Remembrance at conventions, dinners, and schools. Riders also support the troops by providing escorts, flag lines, and sending care packages. Riders assisted with the "We've Got Your Six Veterans Appreciation Fair" in the Northern Black Hills. This year, the Black Hills Riders Chapter #164 planned and held the Colonel Mike Kain Memorial Blood Drive which surpassed its goal.

Americanism is the third pillar. Two main events and programs highlight the impact of the riders. The first step is to educate our youth, resulting in Flag Protection awareness. An annual flag etiquette program by Black Hills Chapter #164 touched 180 first graders in Spearfish; 140 kindergarteners in Belle Fourche, and 30 preschoolers in Sturgis. All chapters reported, planned, and organized poker runs to raise funds for the signature program of the American Legion Riders.

As for the fourth pillar, **Children & Youth**, the American Legion Riders are known in many communities for their volunteerism and service. Some of the most common and regular activities are fish fries, bingo, color guards at community functions, and visiting veterans in hospitals and residential facilities. Other community-based projects are annual events such as sponsoring bands in the park free of charge to the public, participating in community chili cook-offs to support adults with disabilities, and posting colors at the Relay for Life event. Rapid City Chapter #22 adopted a first-grade classroom in Sturgis and conducted monthly activities with the students. Rieck-Morgan Warner Chapter #137 holds a Teddy Bear Ride to collect plush bears to distribute to children while going to hospitals in the Aberdeen area. The Ft. Pierre Chapter #20 held their first fundraiser to support Sleep Heavenly Peace to build beds.

The Riders come together to support their community, the veterans, and military service members, sharing a common love of motorcycles. The American Legion Riders is growing in membership and chapters; this past year, Ft. Pierre Post 20 started a Chapter, bringing our total to 13 chapters.

There are two statewide Riders' meeting. One take place during the Midwinter Conference and the second one usually during the State Convention. To allow to bring the Chapters together and provide a time

to ride, this year the Statewide Riders meeting will be held in Pierre the weekend before Memorial Day in conjunction with the Third Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Soldiers and Sailors War Monument.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all South Dakota American Legion Riders members for their dedication and hard work in serving their communities and advocating for veterans. We are looking forward to another successful year ahead.

Respectfully submitted by Fred Nelson, Department Liaison to the American Legion Riders

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ANNUAL REPORT

Commander Feltman,

It was an honor to serve as Chairman of The American Legion Department of South Dakota Legislative Committee for the 2023 legislative session. The members of the committee are Chairman C.P. Van Delist, Kevin Morello, PDC Rod Martens, Dan Fritz and Mike Mehlhaff. The lobbyists for this year were C.P. Van Delist, Adjutant Kevin Hempel, and Mike Mehlhaff.

On January 24, 2023, the committee held a Zoom meeting to review bills and discuss those of concern to The American Legion Department of South Dakota. The priorities were set, and the committee agreed on which bills we were going to watch, lobby for and lobby against.

The Legislative Committee met in person on February 7, 2023, at Post 8 to review the session up to that time and adjust priorities as necessary. Roll call showed the following committee members present: Department Commander Doug Feltman, Department Adjutant Kevin Hempel, Chairman C.P. Van Delist, Mike Mehlhaff and Kevin Morello. That evening Post 8 hosted a Legislative reception with all Legislators invited. This reception gave all in attendance an opportunity to discuss legislative items and issues that impact on Veterans. Special thank you to Post 8, as always, they were an amazing host.

Below are the results of the bills on the Legislative Committee's list:

Bills Actively Lobbied For:

HB 1039 to revise certain provisions regarding the payment of tuition for members of the South Dakota National Guard.

Signed by the Governor on Thursday, March 16, 2023

HB 1045 to increase the basic salary schedule for county veterans' service officers.

Signed by the Governor on Thursday, March 16, 2023

HB 1046 to provide free tuition at Board of Technical Education institutions for children or spouses of members of the South Dakota National Guard disabled or deceased in the line of duty.

Signed by the Governor on Thursday, March 02, 2023

HB 1196 make an appropriation for improving the buildings and grounds of the capitol complex and declare an emergency.

Signed by the Governor on Thursday, March 09, 2023

HB 1038 revise certain provisions pertaining to the Department of Veterans Affairs and residency in the State Veterans Home.

Signed by the Governor on Wednesday, February 22, 2023

HB 1051 require counties to hire veteran service officers in proportion to the number of veterans residing in the county.

01/23/2023 House Military and Veterans Affairs Deferred to the 41st legislative day, Passed, YEAS 10, NAYS 2.

HB 1052 change the eligibility requirements of a property tax relief program for disabled veterans and surviving spouses.

01/19/2023 House Taxation Deferred to the 41st legislative day, Passed, YEAS 9, NAYS 4.

HB 1151 create the South Dakota paid family leave program.

02/16/2023 House Committee on Appropriations Deferred to the 41st legislative day, Passed, YEAS 9, NAYS 0.

Bills Watched by the Committee

HB 1047 revise certain provisions regarding military affairs.

Signed by the Governor on Wednesday, February 22, 2023

HB 1048 repeal and make technical changes to provisions regarding the Board of Military Affairs.

Signed by the Governor on Wednesday, February 22, 2023

HB 1054 provide a stipend for the erection of a private headstone for a deceased veteran.

Signed by the Governor on Monday, February 27, 2023

SB 12 authorize the construction of a National Guard vehicle maintenance shop in Watertown, to make an appropriation therefor, and to declare an emergency.

Signed by the Governor on Wednesday, February 22, 2023

SB 13 authorize the construction of an addition to the BG Dean Mann Readiness Center in Sioux Falls, to make an appropriation therefor, and to declare an emergency.

Signed by the Governor on Wednesday, February 22, 2023

SB 14 revise the legal description for the construction of a National Guard Readiness Center in Sioux Falls, make an additional appropriation therefor, and to declare an emergency.

Signed by the Governor on Wednesday, February 22, 2023

SB 15 to accept Uniformed Services ID as proof of veteran status to have veteran designation added to a state license or ID card.

Signed by the Governor on Wednesday, February 22, 2023

HB 1065 increase the maximum amount of dollars payable by the state to erect the headstone of a deceased veteran.

Signed by the Governor on Thursday, March 16, 2023

SB 1 modify debilitating medical conditions for medical cannabis use.

Signed by the Governor on Thursday, March 23, 2023

SC 807 Honoring Nyapal Chuol of Sioux Falls, South Dakota Girls State Governor, and Jason Lenning of Harrisburg, South Dakota Boys State Governor, and commending the South Dakota American Legion and Auxiliary for their sponsorship and coordination of the Girls State and Boys State programs.

02/09/2023 Enrolled

SC 801 Honoring the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Singing Legionnaires of American Legion Post 15 in Sioux Falls.

01/19/2023 Enrolled

HC 8005 Commending the South Dakota Air National Guard's 114th Fighter Wing for being awarded the Distinguished Flying Unit Plaque, the William W. Spruance Safety Award, the Winston P. Wilson Trophy, and the Major General John J. Pesch Flight Safety Trophy in training year 2022.

02/02/2023 Enrolled

SB 186 provide free tuition for a resident whose parent died while on active duty in the United States armed forces.

2/13/2023 Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Tabled, Passed, YEAS 5, NAYS 0.

HB 1190 make an appropriation to provide a grant for the construction of a military heritage museum in Sioux Falls and declare an emergency.

2/23/2023 Joint Committee on Appropriations Tabled, Passed, YEAS 15, NAYS 3.

HB 1037 amend the eligibility for admission to the state veterans home and repeal the residency requirement.

02/01/2023 Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Deferred to the 41st legislative day, Passed,

SB 127 revise the eligible disability level for veterans to receive state park benefits.

02/07/2023 Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Deferred to the 41st legislative day, Passed, YEAS 3, NAYS 2.

HCR 6003 Encouraging the Executive Board of the Legislature to authorize the interim legislative study of long-term care services for veterans regardless of disability ratings and to develop long-term care plans for VA-operated purchased and subsidized long-term care services.

02/13/2023 Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Deferred to the 41st legislative day, Passed, YEAS 4, NAYS 1.

Bills the Committee Lobbied Against

HB 1130 require an official declaration of war or other Congressional action before the South Dakota National Guard may be deployed outside of the state.

01/30/2023 House Military and Veterans Affairs Deferred to the 41st legislative day, Passed, YEAS 9, NAYS 2.

If anyone wants more information on a particular bill listed above, please contact me at (605) 210-0408 or cvandelist@gmail.com.

Thank you, Commander Feltman, for this great opportunity to serve as Chairman for the Legislative Committee. Also, thank you to all the members of the committee who worked so hard to make this a highly successful year in the legislature for Veteran and Military related items.

Most Respectfully Submitted,
C.P. VAN DELIST
Legislative Committee Chairman

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ANNUAL REPORT

Department Commander Feltman

The membership came in strong until mid-December. We have been off our pace until Easter, and it is now picking up again, but we have a long way to go to get back on track. Currently we stand at 15,502 or 90.97%. The last two weeks have been good but not enough to get us to the 95% goal. There are currently 77 posts at or above goal with many of them being over 100%.

The Membership team and District Commanders have been working hard contacting post and those whose membership has expired, and they have had some success with the renewals. I owe them my gratitude for working hard to help keep our South Dakota Department strong and working toward National Commander Troiola's 103% goal.

I attended the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and talked to a lot of veterans and signed one past member up again. Another veteran moved from TX to Sturgis for work and wanted to transfer his membership but wanted to find his card and talk to the local post to make the transfer. Other than that, it was just planting seeds and hoping they would grow into members.

The membership table, banners and materials were used at many places around the state. The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and the I Got Your 6 event which is open to all veterans. The South Dakota State Fair, the Brown County Fair and Irene's first ever Christmas Fair. I know the other two sets were also used at other events to help get the word out.

We have encouraged all post to call, text, write or make personal visits to those members who have not renewed and explain what The American Legion does for all veterans.

At this writing we are at 90.97% and need 1,538 new and renewals for the Department to reach 100%. It is achievable but there are some rural post where there are no veterans to recruit to replace those who have reported to Post Everlasting. This was discussed on our last regional zoom meeting with all departments present expressing the same they had the same problems and our national representative telling us this has been discussed for several years with no solution so far.

Thank you, Commander, for this opportunity to serve as your Membership Chairman. I also want to thank the Membership Committee, Adjutant Hempel, Judy, Mary Jo and all who have worked hard to achieve that 100% or more goal. The District Commanders have work hard to encourage each Post to all members to be a recruiter because this is their American Legion.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rodney Smith
Department Membership Chairman

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Commander,

Your SDAL Public Safety Committee had another very good year. It all started with the South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy followed by the selections of the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award and the Firefighter of the Year Award winners.

2022 South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy:

We had 23 outstanding young people attend the weeklong academy held at the Law Enforcement Training Center in Pierre. We had one very late cancelation due to a medical issue and didn't have time to pick an alternate.

Again the South Dakota Highway Patrol did an outstanding job of hosting the event. Ten State Troopers volunteer to be away from their duty stations and families all week to serve as instructors and mentors to our recruits.

The logistics of organizing and conducting this program are challenging but Lt. Maunu and Sgt. Schoenefeld do a fantastic job. The recruits not only learn about the duties of the SDHP but they are also exposed to other Law Enforcement Agencies.

This year the South Dakota American Legion presented our Outstanding Graduate Scholarship to Jaydon Schmalz from Clear Lake. Jaydon is currently a senior and plans to attend Dakota State University and major in cyber security.

Over 30 of our Youth Trooper graduates are currently in Law Enforcement agencies across the state. I believe there are about a dozen who are State Troopers, and several others are serving in the military.

This year we had a very good turnout for our "Blue Cap Day" when Legionnaires and guests visited the Academy. This is always a fun day for the recruits and for the Legionnaires as well. The 2023 Academy will be held the week of 26-30 June. We would like to invite Legionnaires from across the State to come visit the academy on May 29th for a fun day and Legion Cookout.

Your SDAL Public Safety Committee would like to thank everyone in the Legion family for supporting this outstanding program. Your continued support will ensure the future success of the program.

One last thing, we are going to miss Lt. Tony Maunu as he will be retiring before this year's Academy. Tony has been with the program practically since we started. His leadership and mentorship has been crucial to the success of the SDYTA. Thank you, Lt. Maunu, and enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award:

Again, this year, we had a few applications for Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

All of those recommended are very deserving of recognition. As a reminder, when we select the winner, it is important that the sponsoring Legion Post makes sure to follow the criteria and instructions. We forward the State winner to the National competition. When National judges them, if there is anything missing from the application, they will not be considered.

This year's recipient of the "Law Enforcement Officer of the Year" Award is Deputy Sherriff Thomas Mossman from Rapid City. Thomas's nomination comes from Rapid City Post 22. Officer Mossman will be invited to the Department convention for the award presentation. Congratulations Deputy Mossman.

Firefighter of the Year Award:

This year we judged several applications for the "Firefighter of the Year Award". Again, it is important that the applications contain all of the required information or they cannot be considered.

These National programs were established, by resolution, to recognize outstanding first responders from across the country. **"It's what we do"!!**

Every American Legion Post in the State has deserving first responders that deserve recognition. We would like to see much better participation in these programs.

This year's American Legion Firefighter of the Year is Cassandra Christy from Rapid City. Cassandra will be invited to the Department Convention to be recognized for her outstanding service. Post 22 submitted her application. Congratulations Ms. Christy!!

New Resolution:

Your American Legion Public Safety Committee is supporting a resolution submitted to Department, by Redfield Post 92, for consideration at the 2023 state convention.

This resolution will establish a new, South Dakota American Legion “EMT of the Year Award”. This award will recognize those first responders who are dedicated to serving as Emergency Medical Technicians in our communities across the state. It has come to our attention that there is a shortage of EMT’s, and we would like to help promote the much-needed skill. Your support for this resolution would be greatly appreciated.

Again, we would like to thank the American Legion and the American Legion family for supporting these programs and ask that you continue to do so.

NOTE: The applications and instructions for these Awards can be found on (sdlegion.org).

Larry Price
Chairman
SDAL Public Safety Committee

DEPARTMENT SCOUTING ANNUAL REPORT

Commander:

As an Eagle Scout and Legionnaire, it has been an honor to serve as the chairman of the Department Scouting Committee this past year. Our committee includes Matt Lagerstrom, Christopher Rendon, Richard MacDonald, and myself. Along with Department Adjutant Kevin Hempel, we have three Eagle Scouts and two longtime Scouting supporters on the committee.

Boy Scouts were the first youth group that the American Legion supported. Our support for the Boy Scouts of America began at the American Legion's first national convention in 1919. Nationally the American Legion sponsors 2,500 plus units. South Dakota has two primary Councils: The Sioux Council in the East and the Black Hills Area Council in the West. The Sioux and Black Hills Area Council have 159 Scouting units combined, and of those 159 units, 42 are sponsored by an American Legion Post.

Contact your local Troop or Pack and have your Post check into sponsoring or co-sponsoring possibilities. Explore opportunities to help make a positive impact. Consider serving as merit badge counselors. Help provide transportation to an outing. Step forward and help mentor our youth.

The American Legion annually honors the Eagle Scout of the Year at the national convention. The winner receives a \$10,000 scholarship, and the three runners-up are each awarded \$2,500 scholarships.

Each year, the Department of South Dakota awards one Eagle Scout of the Year and this year's Eagle Scout of the Year is Grant Roth from Sioux Falls, SD. The Troop that sponsored Grant is American Legion Post 15 in Sioux Falls, SD.

Congratulations, Roth!

As the scouts say, "Do a good turn daily."

Respectfully submitted,
Fred Nelson, Chairman
Department Scouting Committee

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION ANNUAL REPORT

Commander Feltman,

This year, for the Sons of The American Legion – Detachment of SD, has been nothing shy of amazing. After the year we had last year, I knew this year, we would have our work cut out for us. The Sons across the state have stepped up and proven they are always up for a challenge. The year started off by attending the National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The SD Detachment was well represented and brought home an astonishing 11 National awards. These awards included the Triple Nickel Award, Arthur D. Houghton Award, and South Dakota is home to the 2021-2022 National Recruiter of the Year, just to name a few. To put things in perspective, a detachment averages two awards at the National Convention, and we had 11 last year. To say South Dakota is “on the map” at the national level is an understatement.

Coming back from the National Convention, we worked side by side with our other family organizations at the South Dakota State Fair in the Veterans Building. This proved very fruitful as throughout the week each organization recruited numerous members and answered questions that were brought forth. Then we went into Fall meetings where we had an officer at each meeting. We believe having a strong presence at events creates a caring, important impression for the SAL.

We have chartered 5 new squadrons this past year: Menno, Polo, Rock Creek, Aurora, and Bruce. This along with our current membership and renewal rate will allow us to receive the Triple Nickel Award at the National Convention again this year. Two years in a row for this award is unheard of. I believe a third year is very possible with Parkston, Colome, Winner, Gary, and Springfield prison all showing interest in starting a squadron of their own.

As a Detachment, we have donated more than money per membership capita to the CWF. To this date, that amount is just under \$1,500. We had a Commander’s Challenge this year where funds were raised by squadrons across the state and the proceeds go to either the Veterans and Childrens Foundation or the Childrens Miracle Network of SD. A check will be presented at the State Convention for both causes.

Back to having a strong presence, our Detachment had an officer at each spring meeting as well. No one should ever question our commitment to having a presence, because our leadership drove to Custer and back in one night just to install their newly elected officers. Dewey Hessa drove to Ft. Pierre in a blizzard for a Spring meeting, only to find out that he didn’t get the message it was postponed...(my fault). Our Alternate NEC, Kerry Jorgenson participated in the National Commander’s wreath laying ceremony in Washington, DC again this year.

Currently, I am happy to report South Dakota is 2nd in the nation for membership rate and leading the Midwest Region. We have another all-time high for membership. We sit at a 107% membership rate; our renewal rate is 85%. Our South Dakota Detachment and Sons across the state do amazing work when it comes to membership.

During the Midwinter Conference held in Huron, at the general business meeting, the delegation voted to endorse Jeff Shannon to put his name into consideration for National Vice Commander. If elected, this term would run 2 years. At the same time, the delegation unanimously endorsed Casey Hanson to put his name in the ring for National Commander. This would be a minimum of 5 years out if considered and elected, as the next 4 years candidates are already set in motion.

I need to give a big thank you to our SAL leadership, Shane, Dewey, Jeff, Kerry, Wyatt, Doug, and the headquarters staff. They have all stepped up when asked for help and are there for anything we ask of them.

Respectfully submitted,
Casey Hanson
Detachment Commander

TRAINING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Commander,

It has been a privilege to serve as the Training Committee Chair with the following members: PDC Fred Nelson, Kevin Morello, Krisma DeWitt, and Bill Peters.

The Training Committee is a Standing Committee of the Department of South Dakota American Legion as approved by resolution at the 2021 Department Convention in Huron, SD.

The Training Committee has continued to work on a three-phase training plan developed in 2021. The Training Committee has been very active this year, meeting several times through zoom and once face-to-face, and has completed the following goals in 2022-2023.

- Created a Sub-committee to develop an in-depth plan. The following Legion members served on the sub-committee: Dave Booze, Doug Harris, Krisma DeWitt, Kevin Morello, and Jack French.
- Developed a SDALC in-depth plan to provide educational opportunities within the state of South Dakota for Legion members at the Post, District, and Department level.
- Created a SDALC organizational chart.
- Selected Fred Nelson to serve as the SDALC Chancellor.
- Provided the following classes at the 2023 Mid-winter conference; MyLegion: Kevin Morello and Bill Peters, Successful Posts: Dept Vice Commander Doug Harris, Running a meeting: Dept Finance Officer Krisma DeWitt, Security and Scams: PDC Nelson, Buddy Checks: Commander Feltman & Adjutant Hempel.
- Conducted the first annual SDALC on April 22, 2023. The following classes were taught. Mentorship: Past National Commander David Rehbein, Running a Meeting: Dept Finance Officer Krisma DeWitt, Resolution Writing: Dept Adjutant Kevin Hempel, and Train-the-Trainer: Dept Vice Commander Doug Harris.
- Created a SDALC budget for 2024.

The long-term goal is to grow SDALC into a comprehensive in-state training program. Additional work needs to be done to build a comprehensive program and it will be a multi-year process. As we move forward the Training Committee has the following goals for 2023-2024. Continue to provide classes at Mid-winter. Conduct a face-to-face 2nd Annual SDALC. Begin to develop a train-the-trainer cadre. Develop and approve classes and lesson plans. Make approved classes and lesson plans available to the Posts, Districts, and the Department. Recruit and select skilled instructors to conduct face-to-face and video training. The Training Committee encourages all Legionnaires to provide input, suggestions, and ideas for classes, instructional methods, and instructors.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack French
Training Committee Chair

TRUST FUND COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT

Mr. Commander,

This past year has been one of change and hopefully a new direction. As directed by the Department Executive Committee, we have changed the portfolio from Wells Fargo to Edward Jones. This transition was authorized on 1 Feb 2023 and the last of the funds were transferred on 4/25/2023. The balance of the fund when fully transferred was \$636,622. We now can get fund information when we want it. Working with Travis and Taylor of Edward Jones has been outstanding, and we look forward to working with them in the future. The market continues to be volatile, but with the transition, we hope to show some gains in the future. It has been a pleasure to be working with a local company again.

Respectfully submitted,
Randy Rakness, Chairman, Trust Committee

VA&R COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. Commander,

On behalf of the Department Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission, which members are Chairman Warren Aas of Watertown, Vice Chairman PDC Tim Jurgens of Milbank, Noel Cummins of Milbank, Jim Childers of Spearfish, Jerry Lolley of Sturgis, Carole Gregg of Rosebud, Gary Schumacher of De Smet, and Dr. Tracy Diefenbach of Warner, it gives me great pleasure to present the following Department VA&R Commission report.

The Department VA&R Commission meets once per year with an additional meeting at the discretion of the chairman. We make every effort to meet face-to-face with an alternative method by Zoom or teleconference.

There are numerous awards every post in our department can win throughout the year and be recognized for their achievement either at our MidWinter Conference or on stage at our annual department convention. There are Americanism awards, Membership awards, and several individual awards Legionnaires can win. Is your post aware that it can submit for the Department Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R) Award for Excellence? This award is open to every post in our department. The award will recognize one post in our department each year for their outstanding work and accomplishments in VA&R. All posts can apply for the award, and we encourage all posts to submit for the award. The criteria for the award is on our department website or you may contact State Headquarters for assistance. The deadline for all post applications for this award is May 1st of each year. The winning post will be recognized on stage at all state conventions with a beautiful plaque and group photo to commemorate their accomplishments. Please ask your post leadership to apply for the award.

As a member of the National VA&R Commission, myself, and PDC Jurgens had the privilege of attending the Washington Conference in February 2023 in Washington D.C. to listen and participate in the national VA&R agenda. We listen to many speakers and take action on several resolutions dealing with veterans' benefits, veterans' health as well as the National Cemeteries. We make a point to provide all the information we can get our hands on from our meetings and make it available to all VA&R Commission members in our department.

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) is available for any veteran in your community that may have fallen on hard times and needs some financial assistance to get back on their feet. TFA is generally one-time grant money and other requirements apply. Your post commander has more details about TFA.

If you are a veteran and would like to check into getting enrolled in the VA for healthcare, we encourage you to stop in and see your local Tribal or County Veterans Service Officer in your county for assistance.

Thank you, Commander Feltman, for allowing me the privilege to serve as the Chairman of the Department Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission during your year. We encourage all Legionnaires to attend their post meetings. Ask your fellow members if they need a ride to the meeting. You will be glad you did.

Respectfully submitted,
Warren L. Aas,
Chairman, VA&R Commission

V.A.V.S. COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ANNUAL REPORT

Commander,

Thank You, State Commander Doug Feltman for the appointment to Chairman of the V.A.V.S. Committee this year. It was challenging at times, but in the end, we met the goals we set out for.

We have dedicated leaders in our VA Hospital Representatives: Sioux Falls VA Hospital VAVS Representative Larry Panning; Hot Springs VA Medical Center and State Veterans Home VAVS Representative Angela Koch; and our Ft. Meade VA Medical Center VAVS Representative Buck DeWeese. Additionally, I stopped and visited with Sioux Falls VA hospital on-site coordinator, Crista Pick, she gave me a tour of the improvements made to storage areas and introduced me to one of the volunteers. We discussed the operation and procedures used by her office and I left with the impression the operation was running quite well.

During our annual VAVS meeting, it was decided that coming out of the COVID restrictions and with rising inflation; to raise the amount given to each facility from \$1000 to \$1100. These funds are used for our Veteran's daily needs, for outing activities, and for the annual Halloween & Christmas parties at each center. Each VA medical center has similar needs such as dental and personal hygiene supplies. There is always a need for snacks [beef jerky], popcorn and coffee, shoes, clothing, stamps, and phone cards. To meet this need it is best that each facility has the cash funds available to purchase what they need.

Knowing that most Posts send in a donation of \$10 for each of our Veteran's final service, I encourage that with the recent increase of the funeral stipend from \$50 to \$100 that Posts increase that donation to \$20 or more. Helping support VAVS is just another way The American Legion continues to take care of our Veterans. It is a welcome reminder to our Veterans in Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Nursing Home and VA Hospitals that "You Are Not Forgotten".

In closing I want to say "Thank You" to all the VAVS. Committee members for their dedicated work for Veterans. "Thank You" to all the Legion Posts, Auxiliaries, Sons of American Legion Squadrons and the American Legion Rider Chapters for your time and monies that go for a great cause, the Veterans! Here's wishing good health and God's Blessing to all of you. Please keep the donations coming and Volunteer whenever you can!

Respectfully,

Daniel L. Wyatt

VAVS Committee Chairman