

MICHIGAN LEGIONNAIRE

Vol. XCIV No. 12

michiganlegion.org

July 2026

NEW COMMANDER ELECTED!



Jim Austin
Department Commander
2026-2027

Hello to all my fellow Michigan Legionnaires. Welcome to the first of many monthly articles as your newly elected Department Commander. Thank you for the trust and confidence you've placed in me by electing me for this honorable position. I never had a legion career path; I've just always believed that if you are going to participate in something, it's worth giving your all. I have no hidden agenda, I have and I will continue to do what is right to move our department forward.

I believe I've assembled committees with the same mentality. We have put all our personal beliefs and petty disagreements aside to do whatever is necessary to continue growing this wonderful organization. Remember, no idea is a bad idea. If anyone has an idea they think will positively affect our organization, please contact your leadership. We will do everything we can to implement your ideas.

I will do this job with the utmost integrity and transparency, and all decisions will be based solely on what's right for our organization. As always, my phone number is available, and I will answer all phone calls. Thank you again for your confidence in me to represent our collective best



Debbie Abraham puts Commander Austin's new cover in place



SEE MORE FROM THE
2026 CONVENTION ON
OUR PHOTO GALLERY

<https://michiganlegion.org/2026-department-convention-battle-creek/>



Retiring Commander Avie



Commander Austin Introduces his 2 sons Kyle and Jim, Ann Munoz, his younger brother David Austin and Fiance Debbie Abraham



DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN

In this Edition

<i>Adjutant</i>	Page 3
<i>1st Vice Commanders Report</i>	Page 4
<i>Passport Spotlight</i>	Page 5
<i>Auxiliaire</i>	Pages 6-7
<i>Sons of the American Legion</i>	Pages 8-9
<i>Find a VSO</i>	Pages 10
<i>Around the State</i>	Page 14



"The transition from military to civilian life was a complete change. My time at CSU has largely given me the tools I have needed to succeed professionally."

— Joshua McGinnis, Master of Public Administration

Transition Successfully Into Civilian Life

Columbia Southern University's dedicated military support staff is comprised of current and former military members who understand the unique needs of these students and their families. Our military support team is here to help with:

- » Tuition Rates Below DoD Cap
- » Textbooks Provided At No Cost
- » Courses Offered Completely Online
- » GI Bill* Transferability
- » Military Training Credits
- » Career Services Available



ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Mil
877.347.6050

Orange Beach, Ala. | Gainful employment information available at ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Disclosure.

GI Bill is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government website at www.benefits.va.gov/gibill. **Paid ad. No federal endorsement of advertiser(s) intended. Any reference to U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) personnel, products or services does not constitute or imply endorsement by the DoD.



DEADLINE DATES

August 2026 Deadline is July 13th

Circulation: electronic

HEADQUARTERS DIRECTORY

Publisher: Ronald Runyan

Editor: Jim Showers

The American Legion Dept. of Michigan
212 N. Verlinden, Lansing, MI 48915
(517) 371-4720 Fax: (517) 689-6100

michiganlegion.org

media@michiganlegion.org

STATE ADJUTANT

EXT. 114 adj@michiganlegion.org

LEGION AND SAL MEMBERSHIP

EXT. 124 member@michiganlegion.org

LEGION FINANCE

EXT. 117 finance@michiganlegion.org

PROGRAMS: BOYS STATE, SCHOLARSHIPS, & BASEBALL

EXT. 123 legion@michiganlegion.org

WEBSITE, PR, NEWSPAPER & SOCIAL MEDIA

Ext. 116 media@michiganlegion.org

If you have a photo you would like to submit for the Michigan Legionnaire and/or website use, E-mail it to us at

media@michiganlegion.org or mail it to Department, Attn: Jim Showers.

Please keep the photo at least 200 dpi or larger. If you are submitting a hard copy photo, please note photos printed from a home printer cannot be used, nor can photos clipped from newspapers.

We look for photos showing Legion caps in action whenever possible.

Interested in placing an ad in the Michigan Legionnaire?

Please Contact Jim Showers

media@michiganlegion.org

517-220-2747

MICHIGAN LEGIONNAIRE & AUXILIAIRE

is published monthly by The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Michigan, 212 N. Verlinden, Lansing, MI 48915-1297. Periodical postage paid at Lansing, MI, and additional mailing offices. Subscription \$24 for member to receive the publication.

STATE OFFICERS

State Commander Jim Austin
 State Adjutant Ron Runyan
 1st Vice Commander Roger Deaton
 2nd Vice Commander David Yahr
 1st Zone Mark Holthus
 2nd Zone Sheila Overholts

3rd Zone Tim Shosey
 4th Zone Ed Herter
 5th Zone Mark Maida
 Chaplain Rodney Tolbert
 Finance Officer Scott Nichols
 Historian Pete Ramik

N.E.C Brett Holt
 Judge Advocate Brett Holt
 Sergeant-at-Arms Duane Miller
 Immediate PDC Roger Avie
 Alt. N.E.C Brian Mohlman
 VA and R Director Gary Easterling

As My Tour of Duty Ends

Roger Avie Immediate Past Department Commander

I want to express my deepest gratitude to all my chairpersons for their remarkable work this year. I would especially like to thank my wife. Without her support, I couldn't have served as well as I did. Together, we upheld the four pillars of the American Legion while maintaining fiscal responsibility and ending with many positive outcomes.

In Indianapolis, the National Spring Meeting was an invaluable learning opportunity. I connected with leaders from across the nation, bringing fresh ideas back to Michigan. Our May Budget meeting ensured that each committee will be well-equipped and funded to serve our veterans. While we haven't hit

100% membership yet, at over 95%, we rank in the top 14 nationally. There's still time.

I was inspired by the Youth Awards in Battle Creek, where Americanism thrives in the next generation. I also had the honor of speaking at the 5th District Memorial Service, remembering those we've lost in the past year. Marching in the D.C. Memorial Day Parade with Marty's Golden Aires was a highlight of the year. In our Red, White and Blue Blazers, we were a big hit. On May 5th, I attended and spoke at the Sons of the Legion Annual Convention at Houghton Lake, where I reinforced how vital the Sons are to our mission. To finish the month, I plan on attending the Welcome Day at Boys State at Hillsdale College and, of course, the Annual Convention. There, I will trade my White cap in for a Blue

cap at the convention and reflect on an incredible year. As Immediate Past Commander, I look forward to supporting our veterans in other capacities to further the missions of The American Legion. Thank you for allowing me to be your Commander this past year.



God bless the Legion, our nation, and all of you.



Ron Runyan Dept. Adjutant

As we launch into the 2027 membership year, we want to extend our deepest gratitude to all of our former leaders and committee members for their incredible service over the past year. At the same time, we offer a warm welcome to our newly elected leaders and incoming committees. With your fresh energy and dedication, we look forward to working together and making great strides for our organization in the year ahead!

Key Membership Dates & Renewal Timelines

Our official membership year runs from January 1st through December 31st annually. To ensure a smooth transition and give everyone plenty of time to renew, please keep the following timeline in mind:

- **Early Dues Window:** We begin accepting 2027 dues on July 1st.
- **Goal For Posts:** This early window makes it simple for local posts to achieve 100% membership status by the end of December.
- **Card Validity Rules:** All members must continue to present a 2026 membership card through December 31st, 2026.

Runyan's Ramblings

Moving Forward Together: Welcome to the 2027 Membership Year!

- **Activation Date:** The new 2027 cards will not become valid until January 1st, 2027.

How to Receive Your Membership Cards

All printed physical membership cards are currently being held at the State Headquarters. Posts will receive their member cards according to the following process:

- **Form Submission:** Local posts must turn in all of their required annual paperwork.
- **Card Distribution:** Once forms are fully processed by State HQ, cards will either be made available for local pickup or mailed directly to the post.

Save the Date: Join Us on July 8th!

We strongly encourage all members, leaders, and supporters to join us for our upcoming community event on July 8th. This is a fantastic opportunity to network, celebrate our new leadership, and engage with our community.

Event Schedule:

- **11:00 AM - 1:00 PM:** Community BBQ lunch hosted at the **State Headquarters**.
- **2:00 PM:** Main event and gathering kicks off at the **State Capitol**.

We hope to see a major turnout from all of our local posts. Thank you for your continued commitment to our mission!

We're inspired by the community of veterans still serving in America

For over 50 years, the Legionnaire Insurance Trust has been delivering peace of mind and financial support for veterans, their families, and the Departments of The American Legion.



LEGIONNAIRE INSURANCE TRUST PROGRAM

[Click here to view your member benefits!](#)

LEGIONNAIRE INSURANCE TRUST

Last thoughts on Americanism



Roger Deaton
1st Vice Commander

The family has embraced the Passport Program which has energized comraderies throughout our State. Our Boy Scout Chair Gary Tanner and team have added 18 new scouting troops that are sponsored by the American Legion, our shooting sports Chair Mark Downing has 3 new youth shooting sports teams on the horizon, and the student trooper program is holding strong with mutual synergy by working with other organizations to support this program like the Kiwanis.

How about Boys State!!! 30% growth over last year and moving to a new host "Hillsdale College". Our work will never be done, and we rely on a volunteer system to run and grow our programs. I am encouraging our Post and District leadership to build "Bench Strength" not only with leadership at your organization but also, challenge your post to have folks volunteer at Boys State, Oratorical or just watch one of our American Legion Baseball games.

Be proud to be a part of something bigger... wear your cover and be prepared to brag about our amazing organization and its accomplishments throughout history. It has been a pleasure to be your Americanism chairman, and I am looking forward to the new responsibilities to support the American Legion family.



Legion Legislative Report Tim Poxson, Legislative Chair

It is an honor to serve the members of the American Legion Department of Michigan as Chair of the Legislative Committee. One of the most rewarding aspects of this role is seeing my work with the State Legislature and the U.S. Congress help advance legislation that benefits Michigan veterans. I have also worked to protect key state veterans' benefits, including the property tax exemption for veterans who are 100% totally disabled, from being reduced or eliminated. During this legislative session, we collaborated with a member of the Legislative Committee and the VFW to stop the state from changing the definition of a veteran. Although some of the bills will not pass before the session ends December 31, 2026, I hope to continue those efforts in the 2027-2028 legislative session. Another rewarding part of this position is meeting the many dedicated members of the American Legion. I also value collaborating with Democrats and Republicans in the State Legislature and the U.S. Congress who are committed to advancing veteran issues and improving the lives of veterans. These elected officials understand that veteran issues, like the American Legion itself, are nonpartisan.

On that note, it's election season again. Just a reminder that the American Legion does not endorse any candidate for any position. Furthermore, you cannot have your photo taken with anyone running for office if you can be identified as a member of the American Legion.

You should not place election signs on or near your Post that imply that you support any candidate. Under MCL.257.615 and according to the Michigan Department of Transportation, the adjacent property owner must give approval to place signs in the right of way adjacent to their property; however, the signs will be removed if they block the view of traffic, even with your approval.

If you invite a candidate in to make a presentation to your Post, you must remove or cover up any paraphernalia that identifies your Post as an American Legion Post. If one candidate comes in to give a presentation to your Post, you must invite the opposing candidates to do the same. Our organization does not make endorsements.

The American Legion is a nonpartisan organization, and anything your Post does affects our ability to get and keep veteran benefits from elected officials. It should be noted that you can take a position on a community issue, but not on candidates or partisan issues.

LIT Spotlight – ID Resolve

You could fall victim to one of the fastest-growing crimes in America – and not even know it for months or even years. Identity thieves don't care if you have a big nest egg or no nest egg at all – as long as you have a social security number, you're a target. And every 2 seconds, there is a new victim. That's why Your Department of the American Legion has partnered with ID Resolve to offer you two solutions to help protect your money, time, and financial reputation. Plus, as a member of our American Legion family, you can lock in the protection of ID Resolve at a rate that's less than half the cost of other plans available.

The Legionnaire Insurance Trust "LIT" has two products that can assist You

ID Resolve

ID Resolve helps members stop identity thieves in their tracks. Rest assured that our team of resolution specialists will immediately spring into action at the first sign of identity theft, protecting members' money, time, and financial reputation.

ID Resolve 360

ID Resolve 360 gives members a higher level of protection by pairing monitoring services that sets up a smart "early warning system" to help head off identity theft before it can begin, with ID Resolve's exceptional identity theft resolution services.

As your Trust Director in Michigan and Department Adjutant, I recommend that you seek out these valued benefits at: <https://www.youridresolve.com/pp/lit/>

Passport Post Spotlight

Post 44, A Marquette Tradition Built on Service and Community



Nestled in the heart of Marquette, Richard M. Jopling American Legion Post 44 is much more than a Legion Post—it's a gathering place where community, service, and friendship come together. Visitors quickly discover an active American Legion family, with dedicated members from the Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons of the American Legion all working together to support veterans and strengthen the community.

What makes Post 44 special is its welcoming atmosphere. Whether you're a longtime member or a first-time visitor,



you'll be greeted by friendly faces and a strong sense of camaraderie. The post reflects the spirit of Marquette itself—a close-knit, safe, and welcoming community where neighbors look out for each other.

They proudly carry the name of Richard M. Jopling, a World War I ambulance driver who died while serving in England. His legacy of sacrifice continues through the post's commitment to veterans and community service. Members are especially proud of their renovated building, which originally served as an elementary school until the early 1960s. They are also proud of their Veterans Memorial at a local park.

Throughout the year, Post 44 plays an active role in community events. Summer brings highlights such as Marquette's Fourth of July parade, fireworks celebra-



tions, Veterans Memorial rededication activities, and popular S.A.L. breakfasts. During the winter months, visitors can experience the excitement surrounding the V.P. 200 Dog Sled Race. The post is also known for its support of local youth programs and the Auxiliary's annual effort to provide Christmas gift baskets to veterans at the D.J. Jacobetti Veterans Home, as well as residents of area assisted living and senior housing facilities.

No visit to Post 44 is complete with-



out trying one of its homemade pizzas, a local favorite. Visitors can easily find the post using GPS and should use the upper entrance when they arrive.

Open Monday through Friday from 1:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and weekends from noon to 10:00 p.m., American Legion Post 44 offers a welcoming place where veterans, families, and community members come together. It's a shining example of veterans helping veterans while continuing to make a positive impact throughout Marquette and beyond.

[See Other Passport Posts or Register at https://michiganlegion.org/passport/](https://michiganlegion.org/passport/)

250th Anniversary - Carrying the Legacy Forward

Dan Cooper
Past Department Commander

As our military branches reflect on nearly two and a half centuries of service, veterans understand better than most that the past is never truly behind us. It is carried forward—woven into our discipline, our identity, and

our purpose.

As the United States celebrates its 250th Anniversary, we have been presented with a rare opportunity: not simply to commemorate history, but to use it as a compass for the future.

For veterans, history has never been about nostalgia. It is about continuity. From the earliest days of the Republic to the modern battlefield, each generation of service has inherited more than stories—we have inherited standards.

Courage, adaptability, and commitment were not created in our time, and they will not end with us. They are living traits, sharpened by experience and passed on through mentorship, example, and shared hardship.

Veterans hold a unique place in this legacy. While we may no longer stand the watch in uniform, we remain custodians of institutional memory. The lessons learned in famous battles—and in countless unnamed deployments—are not relics. They are blueprints. They shape how we lead in our communities, how we mentor the next generation, and how we continue to serve without rank or billet.

The 250th Anniversary of our nation is not simply a milestone of endurance—it is a call to stewardship. Every challenge facing America today—social division, global uncertainty, technological disruption—echoes earlier moments in our history. Those who served before us also faced uncertain worlds as they adapted from sail to steam, from trench warfare to maneuver warfare, from analog to digital battlefields. Their example reminds us that honoring tradition does not mean resisting change. It means applying timeless principles to new realities.

By sharing our experiences, modeling resilience, and reinforcing the values that transcend generations, we help ensure that the spirit which carried our nation through its first 250 years will continue through the next century. Our role is not to live in history, but to activate it—to ensure that its lessons remain strong in our posts, our schools, our local governments, and our neighborhoods.

As America marks this historic anniversary, the question is not whether the past still matters. It is whether we will use it.

For Legionnaires—past and present—the mission remains the same: honor what we have learned and carry it forward.





AUXILIAIRE



From the Desk of the President

July 2026



Dawn Gramza
Department President
2025-2026

Bringing This Year to a Close and a New Beginning

As my term as the Department of Michigan President ends, my heart is filled with gratitude. Serving the members of the Michigan Department of the American Legion Auxiliary has been one of the greatest honors of my life. Throughout this year, I have witnessed the kindness, dedication, patriotism, and service that remind me why our organization continues to make such a difference in our mission and continues the legacy of service established by those who came before us.

As we turn the page to a new Auxiliary year, I extend my sincere congratulations and best wishes to our upcoming 2026-2027 Department President, Anita Mennel. May your year be filled with inspiration, friendship, growth, and countless opportunities to make a positive impact. I know you will

lead with passion, dedication, and a commitment to serving others.

To all our members, I encourage you to continue supporting your new leadership team and remain engaged in the important work of the American Legion Auxiliary. The future of our organization is bright because of you.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your Department President. The friendships made, memories shared, and experiences gained will remain with me forever. Though my commitment to the ALA and its mission will continue.

May God bless our veterans, their families, the Michigan Department, and the American Legion Auxiliary. With heartfelt gratitude, your 2025-2026 Department of Michigan President.

Recent Activities



Shannon Werner
Executive Director,
Secretary & Treasurer

As most of you know, our Girls State program was recently held at the beautiful MSU campus here in Lansing, Michigan. I volunteered on the first day during registration. I directed the attendees, parents, grandparents and siblings and kept folks out of the restricted areas. It is such a great experience watching the girls arrive for an entire week away from home, some for the very first time. The activities, schedule and program will change each of them by weeks end. It's amazing and such a good cause if you have extra funds for donation.

We have just finished our largest gathering, our Department of Michigan Convention. Despite a few hiccups, we had a very successful Convention and Memorial Service. In case you don't know, that is the gathering where we have a lot of fun and work packed into a very short period of time. We started the session with our outgoing President, Dawn Gramza's last DEC, flag rehearsal, meetings and later that evening the opening of the American Legion Auxiliary's 105th Annual Department Convention. On Friday, there were announcements for the specific convention committee appointments, scholarship announcements, reports, recommendations, and so much more.

Congratulations to Kathleen Edwards, who was given the Unit/Service Member of the Year Award. She was recognized and honored during our Convention and will be honored at the National Convention coming up August 28 through September 3, in Louisville, Kentucky.

If you haven't attended a Department Convention, consider doing so in the future. There is so much information, knowledge and relationship building. Or consider one of the other get-togethers.

Our Fall Conference is being held in Grayling, Michigan, at the beginning of November this year. You can find all the information about it on our website www.michalaux.org or the Legion's website www.michiganlegion.org. Come February, we will be back in Port Huron for our Winter Meeting 2027. Please plan ahead and join us at one of our upcoming functions!

Something Happening at your Unit? Submit it to the Michigan Auxiliaire!

Send your articles and Pictures (with Cutline) to : info@michalaux.org

Change in National Standing Rules

Sharon Schulte, Constitution and Bylaws Chair

At the June 3, 2026 National Executive Committee meeting, a major change in Standing Rule XI, Units- was approved. It is effective immediately.

Section 6. Membership eligibility through the service of a living veteran may be established by presentation of a current The American Legion membership card. Membership eligibility through the service of a deceased veteran may be established by certification of the deceased veteran's proof of military service by the post adjutant or other post officer or by the unit secretary or other unit officer. Joining online requires an affidavit of eligibility; the Unit may request a copy of the veteran's proof of military service.

What does this change mean?

1. If the applicant is applying for Auxiliary membership through the service of a current Legionnaire, the Legionnaires' current membership card is sufficient to establish eligibility. It is not necessary to see a DD214 of other proof of service.

2. If the applicant is applying through the service of a deceased veteran, presenting the DD214 or other approved documentation will still be required.

3. Currently, a Post officer or the Department Adjutant need to verify eligibility and sign the application. Going forward, the Unit Secretary or other Unit office, may view the documentation and sign the application. This will be especially helpful to Widow Units or Units without a working relationship with their Legion Post. If the Unit chooses to still have the Post Adjutant sign an application to verify eligibility, they may still do that. This change provides additional options.

4. The Unit still has the duty to verify eligibility for applicants who join online or transfer.

Per National, "by expanding the options for who may review and sign membership applications, we are removing barriers and allowing the processing of membership to be more efficient."

This does not change eligibility requirements. It only changes the way we process new applications. Please refer to the Auxiliary National and Department Constitutions for the specific requirements to join our organization.

Please make sure to share this information with your Unit Membership Chairman immediately. If you have any additional questions, please contact me for clarification. My information can be found on the Department website www.michalaux.org in my Program Guide.



American Legion Auxiliary

MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY EXPLAINED

RELATIONSHIP TO VETERAN:



- MOTHER
- DAUGHTER
- SISTER
- GRANDMOTHER
- GRANDDAUGHTER
- SELF — FEMALE VETERANS WHO HAVE SERVED
- MALE or FEMALE SPOUSE

ELIGIBILITY PERIODS: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; and any time after December 7, 1941

TWO PATHS FOR ALA ELIGIBILITY

PATH ONE

The potential member is related to a living veteran by one of the relationships stated above and the veteran is living AND a current member of The American Legion.



If the potential member is a female veteran, she only needs to have served during the eligible time periods to be eligible for ALA membership.

PATH TWO

The potential member is related to a deceased veteran who served during the eligible time periods and was honorably discharged.



The deceased veteran did not have to be a member of The American Legion in order for the potential member to join the ALA.

For more information, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org

UPAA Year End

Bonnie Taylor, District President

We just finished an absolutely wonderful year and an awesome Department Convention, and I am excited about our upcoming National Convention in August. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been President this past year and honored to move forward through another year.

As we do begin a new fiscal year, there's no better time to start collecting information and hours for our reporting next March. So many of our units will be extremely busy over the summer with parades, parties, golf scrambles, children's summer sports, and vacations; we tend to "lose track of keeping track". Especially if the unit takes a hiatus for a month or two. However, a good portion of those events are often reportable, whether under Children & Youth, Community Service, VA&R, or any of our other wonderful programs. Keeping track of your cell phone calendar gives you a month at a glance and makes it easier to transfer to your other reporting methods. We're also seeing more units & posts doing a monthly calendar and publicizing it on social media. Save or screenshot one and use that. There are several different ways to keep track, and you need to do what works best for you. But the most important thing is to Keep Track. Reporting is such an important aspect of our organization, and it can't be stressed enough.

So, in closing, I would like to wish everyone a safe & beautiful summer, and it will be so exciting to see which of our Michigan units will make the big screen at National this year. And remember.....Report, Report, Report!!



Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Michigan

MIKE GLOBKE

Detachment Commander 2026-2027



My name is Mike Globke, although some members around the state know me as "Ponytail." It is an honor to have been elected as your new Detachment Commander for the Sons of the American Legion, Detachment of Michigan, in Houghton Lake, MI. I am proud to be a dual member of the American Legion and the Sons of the American Legion, a Vietnam veteran, and a founding member of the American Legion Riders of Garden City Post 396. I want to start by thanking all of you for everything you do for our veterans, our communities, and our organization. The work our squadrons across Michigan are doing is what makes the Sons of the American Legion such a strong organization. I'd also like to thank Clive Seydell for his leadership this past year. Through his special project at Wilwin Lodge, our members helped raise more than \$45,000 to provide a new dock for veterans. That's something we can all be proud of. This year, my special project is Camp Liberty in Brooklyn, Michigan. Camp Liberty provides veterans with opportunities for outdoor recreation, fellowship, and healing. I hope you'll take the time to learn more about it and consider supporting it throughout the year.

I look forward to working with all of you as we continue to serve veterans and strengthen the Sons of the American Legion.

Final Thoughts



Clive R.A. Seydell
Immediate Past Detachment Commander

As I write this month's article, I do so for the first time as PDC1. With the 2026 Detachment Convention now behind us, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who helped make the convention a success. From our officers and chairmen to the delegates, convention committee members, and those working behind the scenes, it truly took a team effort to make the weekend possible.

One final accomplishment from my Commander year that I am especially proud of was the success of the Commander's Special Project at Wilwin Lodge. Thanks to the generosity of members, squadrons, businesses, and friends of the American Legion Family, more than \$45,000 was raised toward the construction of a barrier-free fishing dock. While the project carried my name, its success belongs to every member, volunteer, and supporter who helped make it a reality.

Planning for the dock continues, and details regarding the installation and dedication ceremony will be announced once finalized. I look forward to the day when veterans, families, Scouts, and visitors can enjoy the completed project for years to come.

Just a few days after the convention, my son Clive and I attended the Chaplains Recognition Dinner at Camp Grayling. It was an honor to assist with the meal and spend time with the military chaplains who serve our nation in uniform. A special thank you to Deb Weatherby for her hard work and dedication in organizing this meaningful event.

From Camp Grayling, Department President Dawn Gramza, Clive, and I traveled north to Marquette for the Upper Peninsula Summer Convention. We were warmly welcomed by the American Legion Family of Post 44, and I would like to thank them for their hospitality. I would also like to thank 5th Zone Commander Zack Pendell for conducting the Sons meeting and the

members who attended.

One of the most meaningful parts of the weekend for me was sharing the experience with my son, Clive. During my year as Detachment Commander, I had the privilege of appointing him as Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms. To now see him elected by the membership as Detachment Sergeant-at-Arms was both rewarding and humbling. Watching his growth and dedication to the Sons of The American Legion has been one of the highlights of my year and reminds me that the future of our organization remains bright.

As I begin my journey as PDC1, I am honored that Commander Mike Globke has asked me to serve as Detachment Adjutant for the coming year. I appreciate the confidence he has placed in me and look forward to supporting him, our officers, chairmen, and members as we continue moving the Detachment forward.

I also look forward to seeing many of you at the Department of Michigan Convention, where I will have the honor of delivering my final remarks to The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary and helping introduce Commander Globke and his leadership team.

Although the gavel has been passed, one final responsibility remains. As Chairman of the Michigan Delegation, I will attend the National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. Representing Michigan at the National Convention will serve as my final official duty connected to my year as Detachment Commander.

While my year as Detachment Commander has concluded, my service to the Sons of The American Legion has not. You will continue to hear from me throughout the year through newsletters, reports, correspondence, and events across our great Detachment.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to serve as your 2025-2026 Detachment Commander. It was truly an honor and privilege. I have full confidence in Commander Globke and his leadership team, and I encourage each of you to give them the same support and dedication that you generously provided me throughout my year.



NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Victor Fisher, Alt NEC

As I prepare to take office as Michigan's National Executive Committeeman at the National Convention in Louisville this August, I want to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the Detachment of Michigan for the trust and confidence you have placed in me.

Being elected to represent Michigan at the national level is both an honor and a responsibility that I do not take lightly. Over the past 2 years, I have had the privilege of serving as Al-

ternate National Executive Committeeman, gaining valuable experience and insight into the work being done on behalf of veterans, service members, and their families across our nation.

I am grateful for the support, encouragement, and friendship I have received from Legionnaires throughout Michigan. Your dedication to our programs, our communities, and our veterans continues to inspire me. As I take on this new role, I will work diligently to ensure that Michigan's voice is heard and respected at the national level.

I look forward to representing our

great Detachment, advocating for the issues that matter most to our members, and continuing the proud tradition of leadership that Michigan has long demonstrated within The Sons Of The American Legion.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I am proud to serve, proud to represent Michigan, and excited for the work ahead. I also want to congratulate Todd VanDam on winning the election for Alternate National Executive Committeeman, to our great Detachment. He also will be sworn in at our National Convention in August.

THE MICHIGAN SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION 2026 CONVENTION



Changing of the Guard PDC Clive R.A. Seydel and New Detachment Commander Mike Globke



PDCs Victor Fisher and Todd VanDam



There are no small fish, only small fishermen! Henry Van Dusen



Past Detachment Commanders Group With Steve Honigfort National Vice Commander, Central Zone



Immediate Past Commander Clive enjoying his retirement fishing in his underwear



Department Commander Avie stopped by to share the Legions Appreciation



Brett Holt, 250 Committee Chair explains the upcoming July 8th event



Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

**Gary Easterling
Director**

Our staff is dedicated to providing the very best veterans' advocacy to Michigan Veterans and their families. They can assist with Claims Preparation, Presentation and appeal counsel in Veterans' benefits services. Let us assist you and your dependents in getting the benefits that you have earned by your service to your country.

Gary Easterling, Director

Cell (313) 549-8557

geasterling@michiganlegion.org

Office Phone (313) 964-6640

Fax (313) 964-5697

Call for a Service officer in your area:

833.648.3826 Option 1

e-mail - al.vbadet@va.gov

[like us on Facebook:](#)

[@MichiganVAR](#)

Check out all your benifits at

www.mivabenefits.org

DON'T FACE THE VA ALONE!

Find an American Legion Veteran Service Officer near you. Use an Accredited Veteran Service Officer. Find a Service Officer near you at <https://www.mivabenefits.org/find-service-officer/> OR Call **833.648.3826** Option 1 and they will guide you to an accredited veteran service officer who will help you.

Service Officer

Office Locations

Phil Babcock.....	Charlevoix, Petoskey, Kalkaska, Manistee Ludington, Big Rapids, Lake City
Patty Breas.....	Hastings, Caledonia, Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Wyoming, Holland
Brian Brooks	Ann Arbor
Josh Clark.....	Benton Harbor, Battle Creek, Coldwater
Kieshan Counts.....	Bay City, Saginaw, Vassar
Gary Easterling	Detroit
Stephanie Fisher.....	Onaway, Rogers City
Shay Grady.....	Rapid River, Ishpeming Little Lake, Marquette, Gwin
Valerie Johnson	Farwell, Ionia, Lansing, Battle Creek Bath, Grand Ledge, Eaton Rapids, Jackson, Laingsburg, Corunna
Courtney Mills.....	Ravenna, Muskegon, Grand Haven
Lisa Misenko.....	Troy, Oxford, Rochester, Detroit
VSO TBD.....	Detroit, Swartz Creek
Matthew Schantz.....	Garden City, Southgate, Detroit
Justin Schave.....	Detroit
Tommy Simpkins.....	Saginaw
Stacy Thill.....	Escanaba, Manistique
Rick Wiles.....	Sault Ste. Marie, St. Ignace, Gaylord
Kimberly Napoleon.....	Saginaw

16th District



**Pete Ramik
Commander**

Well, the Year went by fast, and my term as District Commander has come to a close. I want to thank everyone who helped out during the past year. Without you, the District would not have done so well.

Again, only because of you, we achieved 99.17% of our Membership goal. I'm not positive, but I believe that was the highest percentage for the Department. Hats off to you and a round of applause. You earned it.

The Americanism Banquet was another huge success this year, thanks to Pam Globke and her Crew. Also, our Memorial Service went well thanks to Ashley Holthus, 16th District Auxiliary Chaplain.

I've always said, "If you have dedicated people to help out, it all turns out well." The 16th District has the Best Group I have ever had the honor of working with. Thanks to you all.

YOU HONORED US WITH YOUR SERVICE.

Now let us honor you.



Join us for a complimentary meal and pre-planning seminar to learn about VA burial benefits available. For more information, contact Anthony.Lauri@DignityMemorial.com or 586-775-2424.

We're proud to partner with the Department of Michigan American Legion.

Dignity
MEMORIAL

☞ LIFE WELL CELEBRATED ☞

DignityMichigan.com

A Life Dedicated to Helping Veterans Heal Michigan Legionnaire post 101 wrote a book on PTSD and the effects of Agent Orange-Jess Mancini Reporter, The Parkersburg News and Sentinel

Vietnam War veteran John Danielski, 75, has turned his own struggles into a lifelong mission of helping fellow veterans find hope and healing.



Danielski enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps at just 17 after convincing his father to sign his enlistment papers. Following boot camp in San Diego, he served in Vietnam from 1968 to 1970 with the 3rd Marines and later the 1st Marines after his original unit, Delta Company, suffered devastating losses in combat.

His first combat experience came in June 1968 near Hill 36, where his platoon came under intense enemy fire. During two years in Vietnam, Danielski distinguished himself through extraordinary courage, earning two Bronze Stars for heroism, the Combat Action Ribbon, the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry and the Presidential Unit Citation.

Returning home, however, proved to be another battle. Like many Vietnam veterans, Danielski struggled with what would later be recognized as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Unable to understand what he was experiencing, he drifted across the country before eventually settling in West Virginia. PTSD affected every aspect of his life, including his family, friendships and employment, ultimately leaving him homeless.

His life changed when a veterans employment officer connected him with treatment at the VA Medical Center in Clarksburg. After completing substance abuse treatment, he entered a six-month PTSD program that taught him how to manage the emotional triggers and trauma that had controlled his life.

More than three decades later, Danielski continues to advocate for veterans facing similar challenges. Through the Mid-Ohio Valley Veterans Support Group, he has helped veterans access mental health care, housing, food assistance, benefits and community programs. He has also supported fundraising efforts that allowed veterans to visit historic landmarks on therapeutic group trips.

Danielski also shared his experiences by writing *Johnny Come Crumbling Home with PTSD and the Effects of Agent Orange*, a book that chronicles his journey through war, PTSD and recovery.

His commitment to service continues today in an unexpected way. At 75, Danielski is pursuing a degree in social work and counseling at Washington State College of Ohio in Marietta, with plans to graduate in May 2027. His goal is to become a certified drug, alcohol and PTSD counselor so he can continue serving veterans in need.

Although most of his classmates are decades younger, Danielski values the exchange of knowledge.

After a lifetime of service—first in combat and now in his community—John Danielski remains committed to ensuring that no veteran has to face life's battles alone.



THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN FALL CONFERENCE 2026

Hosted by 20 North Convention Corporation

November 6 - 8, 2026

Registration Form

Contact 20northconventioncorp@gmail.com or call Charles Boman at 989-217-0161 with any questions.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

The American Legion requires each person attending any meeting, session, or event in connection with the Conference to register with the corporation and be issued proper credentials.

Registration fee is \$25.00 per person, except for Junior SAL and Junior Auxiliary under 18 yrs of age.

(Please print legibly so we can spell your name correctly on your conference badge.)

Keep a copy of this form for your records. Confirmation of registration will be emailed.

Name _____ Leg Aux Sons ALR Location (# & city) _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

email address: _____ phone: _____

Additional registrants covered under same payment:

Name: _____ Leg Aux Sons ALR Location (# & city) _____ Under 18? Yes [] or No []

Name: _____ Leg Aux Sons ALR Location (# & city) _____ Under 18? Yes [] or No []

Name: _____ Leg Aux Sons ALR Location (# & city) _____ Under 18? Yes [] or No []

Total adult registrations _____ times (x) \$25.00 per person = \$ _____

Checks payable to: 20 NORTH CONVENTION CORP or (20NCC) should be mailed to: PO BOX 692, PETOSKEY, MI 49770

(THERE IS NO OPTION FOR ONLINE REGISTRATION FOR THIS EVENT)

Lodging Reservation Information

Room reservations at the Host Hotel are **your responsibility** and should be made directly with them

FC26 will be at TreeTops Resort in Gaylord.

TO MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS

CALL **(989)732-6711** AND TELL THEM YOUR ARE WITH

THE AMERICAN LEGION FALL CONFERENCE 2026

There are two facilities at Tree Tops.

The **Lodge** rooms are **\$137.97/night**, taxes and fees included. The **Inn** rooms are **\$121.10/night**, taxes and fees included. Chalets and cottages are available for large groups staying together. 4, 6 or 8 queen beds from about \$375 to \$750/night.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ALA AND SAL, ESPECIALLY, RESERVE AT THE LODGE AS YOUR MEETING SPACES ARE IN THAT BUILDING.

TreeTops is located at 3962 Wilkinson Rd, Gaylord, MI 49735



Baseball Update

Tim Walters, Baseball Chairman

While this legion year is coming to an end, I still have, along with the rest of the Baseball Committee, to complete the three baseball tournaments, which don't take place until the end of July.

I was asked by Commander Avie to make Michigan Baseball as fair as we can, and to do so without making it worse. The Committee and I have updated the rules and procedures and have started working to get more teams involved or to return to Michigan Baseball.

I know that making changes just to

change things is not productive or what Michigan baseball needs, so there are many more things that I would like to see happen for our baseball program. But that takes time and will be up to the incoming commander and who he chooses to lead the baseball committee next year.

I really enjoyed working with the other committee members and will continue to do so if I am asked to serve another year for the new commander.

Some of the best baseball in the state of Michigan is being played at your local American Legion ball field. Take the family and go watch and cheer the boys on.



District Meetings

The best way to increase participation at your District meetings, is to Pulicize your District meetings!

As soon as you can send your District meeting times to media@michiganlegion.org. Once we receive them we will publish them every month in the pages of the Legionnaire, and on our Website www.michiganlegion.org

AMERICAN LEGION MEMBERSHIP WORKSHOP & TRAINING

★ ★ STRONGER POSTS. STRONGER MEMBERS. STRONGER COMMUNITIES. ★ ★

 **SATURDAY**
JULY 25TH
9AM TILL 3PM



 **RICHARD F SMITH POST 29**
3200 LANSING AVE, JACKSON, MI 49202
517-782-6675

PURPOSE

This workshop is designed to help American Legion posts strengthen membership growth, improve retention, engage younger veterans, and build a welcoming culture that supports long-term participation.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

By the end of this training, participants will be able to:

-  Understand current membership challenges and opportunities
-  Develop effective recruitment strategies
-  Improve member retention and engagement
-  Build stronger community visibility
-  Create actionable membership goals for their post
-  Utilize social media and outreach tools effectively
-  Strengthen relationships with veterans, families, and community partners

RECRUIT
NEW MEMBERS

RETAIN
OUR MEMBERS

ENGAGE
OUR COMMUNITY

BUILD A
STRONGER
AMERICAN LEGION



BE THE ONE

Myth Busting

Scott Nichols
1st Zone Commander

I've enjoyed my time as the 1st Zone Commander this past year. I attended several district and post meetings in the five-county area and had great conversations with

many members.

When you talk to so many people across a large area, you often see a pattern of questions or concerns that come up. Many are legitimate, but I've discovered several that are false and not grounded in reality. I want to address two myths I hear repeatedly.

Myth #1: We can't make our membership goal because we're all competing for the same veterans. This is false.

We have over 50k members, but there are approximately 560k veterans living in Michigan. Less than 9% are members, meaning there are 500k "potential" members we haven't asked to join. For example, 65k veterans live in Wayne County, but only 4,188 (6.4%) are Legion members. There are more than enough veterans for every post to

achieve their goals and grow over the next decade. When I hear this myth, I ask, "How are you recruiting new members?" Mostly, the answer is "We wait for National to send us one or we wait for them to walk through the door".

My home post has grown by an average of 15% per year over the past 5 years, and that accounts for losing 5 or more to Post Everlasting annually. We don't have a building, we don't have a lounge, and we don't even have a commercial kitchen. We sustain growth through a membership plan we refine year after year. Recently, we purchased contact information for 4,400 veterans living within a 10-mile radius of our post. This, on top of our community outreach programs and volunteer opportunities, ensures our continued growth.

Myth #2: Kids today just aren't interested in programs like Boys State, Girls State or the MSP Student Trooper Program. This is false.

2 weeks before the event, there were 29 youths seeking a sponsor for Boys State. That's almost a quarter of the Boys State attendees. There are opportunities to sponsor a youth in 7 of the 15 districts. This doesn't

even include the young women seeking sponsorship for Girls State. Jackson County received so many applications to the Student Trooper program that they had to reach out to Washtenaw County for help sponsoring a youth. This year, my post is sponsoring 6 high school youth to summer programs.

As post volunteers change and school employees retire, we lose our ability to connect with schools and youth. One thing that remains constant is that young people are always looking for opportunities to make themselves stand out in college, service academies and job applications. Our youth programs are just the ticket.

The Legion was founded in 1919, but we can't operate as if we were still in 1919. If we did, there wouldn't be a VA, GI Bill or disability ratings. We can't wait for the veteran to walk through our door or the high school student to beg us to sponsor them. Those willing to adapt to changing demographics and situations will continue to grow. Those who don't will simply close, and that would be truly unfortunate for future veterans in those communities.



WILWIN LODGE AT CYGNET COVE

ANNUAL FUNDRAISER



July 11TH 12^{PM}

2026

3383 E Hawley Rd
Custer, MI 49405



Around the State...

Holt Post 238 Gives \$4,800 to Fisher House



L to R: 1st Vice Michael Grant, Commander John Brauer and Joel Collin of Fisher House

Event Raises Over \$1100 for Vets

Harbor Springs, Post 281 hosted an event in which Captain Richard Phillips (played by Tom Hanks in the movie) spoke about the 2009 hijacking of his ship by Somali Pirates.



L to R: Commander Mark Riha with Capt. Phillips

Post 365 Scholarships

The Post presented \$500 scholarships



L to R: Ella Lujan, Addyson Braaksma, Jackson Bement, Kari Anglemyer & Alexia Bell

Post 110 at Work



John Clark, Terry Coughlin and Terry Taylor repairing siding at the Post's Higgins Lake Cottage

David Low Reelected Commander of Wayland Post 266, at the age of 98



Commander Low is a Marine veteran of WW2. A Legionnaire for 77 years, he represented the Post riding his Spider motorcycle in this year's Memorial Day parade.

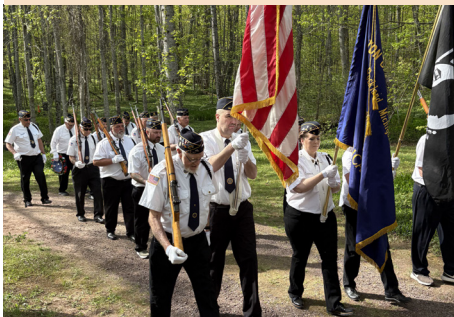
Post 29 ALR's Poker Run



With over 50 riders, Jackson Post 29 Riders held its first (hopefully annual) motorcycle poker run to raise money for Michigan's Boys State & Girls State programs. They raised over \$1200 in sponsorships.

Rockland Post 92 Memorial Day

The Rockland area observed Memorial Day with veterans, families, and residents gathering to honor the brave men and women who gave their lives for the nation.



Post 92 gathered at the Irish Hollow Cemetery to offer a 21-gun salute for those who never returned.

Edwardsburg Post 365 Held an Official Flag Retirement Ceremony. These are the Before and After pictures



Walter T Roach Squadron 182 & Family



Each quarter, the Post Legion Family honors some local veterans, shown here recognizing US Army and Korean War Veteran Ernie Myers

All-American Award

Fifteen fifth-grade students from Surline Middle School earned the All-American Award, sponsored by Post 103 in West Branch. The program encourages responsibility, patriotism, and personal accountability, and the number of students earning the award continues to grow each year.



Pinckney Memorial Post gets a Hand

Scouting America Troop 310(G) and Troop 312(B) help Pinckney Memorial Post and Unit Officers and members carry the last of 998 American Flags to the Flag Retirement Ceremony for proper disposal on Flag Day.



Vets With Nets

Raising a 40 ft x 60 ft Flag to start the Vets with Nets fishing tournament. 1st Vice Jim Austin, with co-workers from DTE, provided the Flag and Equipment



2nd Zone Teacher of the Year

Post 28 in Grand Haven nominated Andrew Ratke, from Ferry Elementary, for 2nd Zone Teacher of the Year. He received a plaque and \$500.



Andrew Ratke & Larry Money

Post 459 Family - "Backs the Blue"

Each group donated \$250 for pizzas delivered and our trifold on display. The Aux. also donated over 700 cookies & made a separate \$250 donation to the GRPD Foundation.



Back-Chair Margo Forrester, Cmdr. Ted Terhune, Ofcr. Daily, Ofcr. Snyder, Past SAL Cmdr Dan Parsaca, new Cmdr. Roger Andresiak, front left Pres. Rose Scharphorn.

Mt. Pleasant Post 110 Flag Retirement Ceremony



Steve Rellinger preparing to retire a flag at the event

Dexter Post # 557 Honors Seniors for Leadership, Service, and Academic Excellence with \$1,000 scholarships



L to R: Commander Doug Rousell, Collin McIntyre, Caden Capelli, Awards Chairman, Ben Howison

Charles A. Conklin Post 28

Presented Certificates of Appreciation To: Alecia Helmus, Lillian Ver Duin, Amelia Ver Duin, Sara Ver Duin, Charlotte Den Besten, Aubrey Kriger, Annalise Van Prooyen, Isabella DeWys. In recognition and sincere appreciation of outstanding service and Assistance which contributed to the advancement of the American Legion programs and activities, including "Four Chaplains Program"



Tecumseh Post 34 presents \$500 scholarships to graduates



L to R: Post Commander George Doutré, Post Adjutant and ALR Director Henry "Fred" Strand, Bryce Radant and Kaylee Reiser

Camp Grayling Chaplains Appreciation Dinner





**2026 NATIONAL CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM
 ROOM BLOCK : AUGUST 25 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 3
 LOUISVILLE, KY – GALT HOUSE HOTEL – National HQ Hotel**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Cell Phone _____

Rooms (Quantity): King _____ Queen Double: _____ ADA: _____ Rollaway: _____

Arrival Date: _____ Arrival Time: _____ Departure Date: _____

FLYING / Flight # _____ DRIVING

All Rooms are \$142 per night (Plus 17.66% tax). The first night’s room deposit is required on this form.
 All rooms MUST be made through Adjutant Runyan and the Department block.

Self-Parking \$40/day, Valet Parking \$45/day. Rollaway bed \$25/day, No Suites Available

Last Name	First	Cell #	LEG/AUX/SAL

Notes or Request: _____

Registration fee is \$35.00 for Legion members and guests. ALA & SAL - send registration fees to ALA & SAL as required for delegates. Michigan Party: Tickets are \$50 per person, Saturday, 8-29-2026

Enclose check or provide credit card info below:

First room night of \$167.07	x # of rooms	\$ _____
Legion Registration @ \$35 each	x # of badges	\$ _____
Michigan Party @ \$50 each	x # of attendees	\$ _____
National Commander Banquet @ \$75 each	x # of tickets	\$ _____
Total		\$ _____

Michigan Party will be held at Churchill Downs. No transportation provided (6.4 miles from hotel)

Make checks out to: The Department of Michigan American Legion or Cash – Credit Cards taken by calling Ron at 517-220-2748 or Wanda 517-220-2751

**RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED AT DEPARTMENT BY JULY 10, 2026 - ATTN: RON
NO REFUNDS AFTER THIS DATE**



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN'S

250TH

CELEBRATION OF
AMERICA

ON THE MICHIGAN STATE CAPITOL GROUNDS
LANSING, MICHIGAN

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8TH, 2026 ★ 2:00 PM



**A HISTORIC READING
OF THE DECLARATION
OF INDEPENDENCE
BY COLONEL NIXON**



**BEN FRANKLIN
WILL TELL THE STORY OF
HOW THE DECLARATION OF
INDEPENDENCE WAS WRITTEN.**



**PLYMOUTH FIFE
AND DRUM CORPS**

JOINING US IN CELEBRATION



**SONS OF THE
AMERICAN
REVOLUTION**



**DAUGHTERS OF THE
AMERICAN
REVOLUTION**



**COLONIAL MILITIA
WILL BE ON HAND
FOR A RIFLE SALUTE**



**HONORING OUR PAST
CELEBRATING OUR FREEDOM
INSPIRING OUR FUTURE**



★ **ALL AMERICANS WELCOME – BRING YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS!** ★
FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT MICHIGANLEGION.ORG