

# MI LEGIONNAIRE

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May 2026



## MEMORIAL DAY

 **AMERICAN  
LEGION**

DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN

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**DEADLINE DATES**

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Please keep the photo at JPG. Do not submit a hard copy photo, Also 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.

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**What it covers:**

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Guaranteed acceptance for Legion Family members, no health questions or medical exams required.

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**Why it matters:**

With guaranteed acceptance and flexibility, it is an easy way to enhance your family's financial security without medical exams.

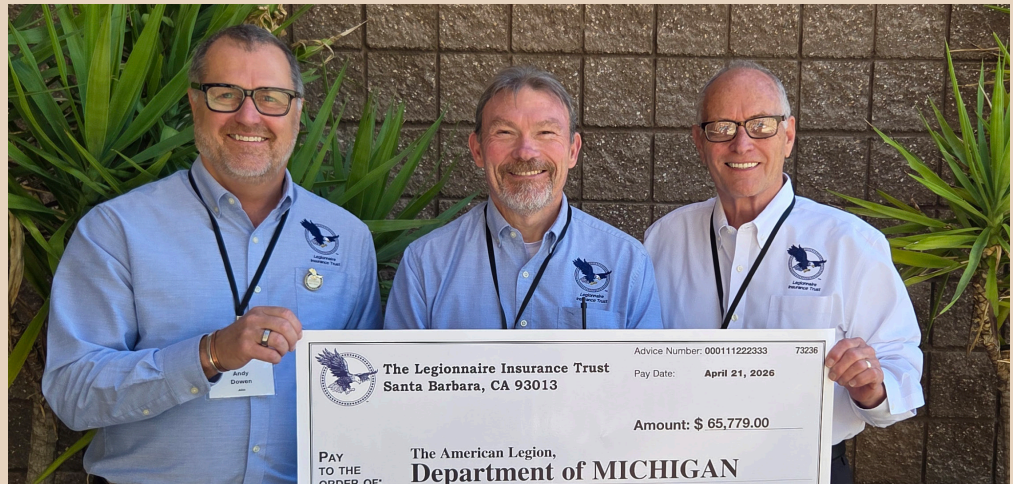
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Adjutant Ron Runyan receives a \$65,779 check for the Department of Michigan's portion of the Legionnaire Insurance Trust. Funded by the no cost LIT Insurance Program

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### STATE OFFICERS

State Commander. . . . . Roger Avie  
State Adjutant. . . . . Ron Runyan  
1st Vice Commander . . . . . Jim Austin  
2nd Vice Commander . . . . . Roger Deaton  
1st Zone . . . . . Scott Nichols  
2nd Zone. . . . . Fred Youngs

3rd Zone . . . . . Leo Cowdry  
4th Zone . . . . . Mike Pergande  
5th Zone . . . . . Mike Trickey  
Chaplain. . . . . Mike Schlaack  
Finance Officer. . . . . Brian Mohlman  
Historian . . . . . Robert Higley Jr.

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



### My Busy Year is Quickly Is Winding Down Roger Avie, Department Commander

As my year continues to move swiftly toward its conclusion, the pace has not slowed, and the opportunities to serve alongside so many dedicated Legionnaires remain both meaningful and memorable. On March 19th, I visited Post 390, where we proudly agreed to support two juniors from each Livonia high school, along with 2 students from the Edison Academy at Greenfield Village, for Boys State, resulting in 8 scholarships for Boys State. I encourage all posts, where possible, to identify and sponsor students for Boys State. If you can't find candidates, I ask that you consider donating to the program to ensure Boys State continues to thrive.

The following evening, I attended an event at the USA Hockey facility honoring the American Legion and all veterans. First District Commander R. Karl Burnett had the honor of dropping the ceremonial first puck. The evening included generous hospitality for veterans and numerous vendors sharing valuable resources and benefits.

On the 22nd, I had the pleasure of attending Post 143's Americanism First Responders Awards ceremony. It was an

inspiring evening recognizing firefighters and police officers of the year, and a true reflection of the values we uphold.

The Oratory Contest on March 28th brought me to the Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing. The students' knowledge of our Constitution and laws was impressive, reaffirming the importance of our youth programs. On the return trip, we stopped at Post 235 in Brighton, where we were warmly welcomed and enjoyed outstanding fellowship in a beautiful facility. The following day, I attended the First District meeting at Post 32, where membership challenges were discussed, then shared those concerns with Regional Vice Commander Steve Wiseman on the 31st.

In April, we held our monthly Commanders and Adjutants Q&A Zoom meeting, led by Ashley in Ron's absence. It was a productive session addressing timelines, requirements, and responsibilities. I also attended a 40 and 8 meeting, where membership and Scholarships remained central topics. While we fell short of the 95% membership goal by April 8th, no Department made it either. We got 93%, placing us 11th overall. We are short 3,524 members, either renewals, transfers, or new enrollments, to reach 100% by June 30th. We have met every challenge so far,

and I believe we will meet this one as well.

At the Commanders Group meeting on April 13th, I met again with the MVAA Director, Terry Sabo. We focused on supporting veterans' organizations and strengthening membership efforts statewide.

The Annual testimonial dinner honoring myself, Commander Clive Seydell, and President Dawn Gramza had 117 attendees from across Michigan. The evening was filled with camaraderie, good humor, and lasting memories. And speak-



ing of camaraderie, the [Passport Program](#) is doing extremely well throughout the State of, and the participation has been extraordinary—great job, Vice Commander Deaton and the Americanism Team.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis, lastly I will attend the May 11th Budget Meeting in Lansing.

## COMMANDERS PROJECT

**THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE PURCHASED A COIN AND TO THE POSTS, UNITS, SQUADRONS AND DISTRICTS THAT HAVE ALREADY DONATED. YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE GREATLY APPRECIATED!**



**Your \$10 donation gets you A SPECIAL COMMANDER COIN, WITH 100% OF THE DONATION GOING TO FREEDOM CENTER, SUPPORTING VETERANS IN MICHIGAN.**



**Ron Runyan  
Dept. Adjutant**

### Runyan's Ramblings: You have to Save Money to Make Money!

This month, our state Finance Committee will be meeting to review our current state of finances, review and plan for the next budget and prepare for the next year. During this meeting, we will be discussing our current state dues rate and whether it needs to change.

As you know, costs have been increasing across all aspects of life, including programs, services and meetings.

However, there is a way you, as American Legion members, CAN HELP prevent a dues increase! Yes, YOU can help!

The way that you, as a member, can ensure dues rates do not increase is to participate in benefits and insurance products by the Legionnaire Insurance Trust or The LIT. Now, I am sure you are wondering, "How can participating in these programs not make my dues increase?" Well, in short, when you, as members, buy products and services from the LIT, the Department of Michigan receives royalties from your premiums.

That's right, I have just returned from the annual LIT meeting, and we received over \$65,000. That is more than a dollar per Legion member, and THIS HELPS keep dues rates where they are.

Many of the products and services they provide are the same ones we all use, but from other sources. So, I highly encourage you to give The LIT site a look and see how you can keep Dues RATES from increasing. Go to <https://www.thelit.com> or call them at 1-800-235-6943

# Membership Report



**Jim Austin**  
1st Vice Commander

As I sit here enjoying the nice spring breeze, I reflect on the upcoming remembrance of Memorial Day and its significance to Veterans and all Americans alike. Remembering the sacrifices of those who have come before us is precisely

why we do what we do.

We missed our 95% membership goal by 2.4%. Our teams have been doing amazing work, and this minor setback is by no means a negative reflection of our phenomenal members and the work they have been doing. Remember, recruitment does not stop in the summertime. In fact, it is a wonderful time. City festivals, local carnivals, camping, etc., are all activities that veterans enjoy and opportunities to extend a welcoming hand.

If you want to be a part of shaping this organization into what it will be for the next one hundred and six years, now is the time. If you are passionate about any of the Legion Programs, get your committee volunteer form submitted. We have over fifty-two thousand Legion members in Michigan, and fewer than one hundred department committee members. We know everybody is busy, but it is minimal time throughout the year, and how exciting it would be to have your fingerprint on the future of our organization. I know it's a big ask, but I am asking, so please step up!

Remember, we all want this organization to move forward. It does not matter what your personal or political beliefs are; it is all about the American Legion. Let us put all our petty differences aside and help our great organization expand to new and greater heights.

## 2025 - 2026 NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATES

ARMED FORCES DAY	MAY 13, 2026	100%
DELEGATE STRENGTH	30 DAYS PRIOR TO NATIONAL CONVENTION	



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# Americanism Report



**Roger Deaton**  
2nd Vice Commander

Spring is in the air! Or snow, depending on where you are in our great state. Anyway, happy May to the Legion family. Your Americanism team has been busy and in so many great ways.

Junior Shooting Sports Chairman Mark Downing will accompany the Boys State committee to Hillsdale College to review the shooting ranges and prepare for future

Boys State programs, which may include shooting competitions. We need posts to support new teams in 2026 -2027. Americanism is seeking sponsors for the shooting sports program; see the JSSP article in this month's edition.

Scouting America Chairman Gary Tanner is doing just an amazing job with this program. We are discussing ways to increase the program numbers, how Post can provide Eagle Scout projects and how to gain support from the scouts. We will have more information on this as well in the future as we continue to engage with the Scouting America leadership.

While preparing for elections, I would suggest that you appoint a member as your post-Americanism Chairperson. Use this position as a way for a legionnaire who may not want to be an Officer to get involved, or for any member who could use it to stay involved in the post. Either way, create an agenda for them to report on these activities.

Boys State applications are live on our website, and registration is ongoing. The program is at Hillsdale College from June 21-27. The Committee thanks all who have supported the "America 250 Initiative," and anyone who can donate \$1776.00 or any amount. Make checks payable to "Michigan American Legion Foundation" with a note "Boys State General Fund." The Boys State Alumni Association is well on its way and will have a membership drive at during the program. The Alumni Association will provide mentorship opportunities, aid in growing Boys State participation, camaraderie with alums and the Legion Family and develop a revenue stream for this program. If you know of an alumnus, please have them email [legion@michiganlegion.org](mailto:legion@michiganlegion.org) with their contact information.

I have attended and spoken at many events this past month; it is an honor to represent the American Legion. On Tuesday, April 28th, I attended the Eagle Scout Dinner at the Packard Proving Grounds in Utica. I gave a brief speech about the American Legion's support of scouting and how we assist each other. With Memorial Day events on our doorstep, I encourage all to take time to attend a memorial or parade, or to visit the post and be with your legion family. I will be in Washington, D.C., with many of our State Officers for the America 250 parade. While I am gone, I want to see everyone back in Michigan posting on their events. [Check out my 2nd Vice Commander's Facebook page](#) for updates and events that I attend.

## Program Dates and Deadlines

### May 2026

- May 1st- Student Trooper Application submission deadline
- May 15th- Baseball insurance purchase deadline
- May 15th-17th- National Oratorical Contest at Hillsdale College

### June 2026

- June 1st-Boys State Application submission deadline
- June 1st- Final day for Baseball teams to register
- June 21st- 27th -Boys State program at TBD

### July 2026

- July 1st-Robert Turner Baseball Scholarship submission deadline
- July 15th- Diamond Baseball Scholarship deadline
- July 19th-24th- Student Trooper Program
- July 21st- 25th - JSSP American Legion National Championship (Individual)
- July 25-28- Class AA, Senior Baseball State Tournaments in Adrian, MI
- July TBD- Class A Baseball State Tournament in TBD
- July TBD- Junior Baseball State Tournament in TBD

## Finance and Personnel Report Ray Carlson, Chairman

The Committee year began at Convention in Sault Ste. Marie with the Convention Approval of a Budget Revenue of \$2,488,200 and Budget Expenses of \$2,876,472, leaving a deficit of \$388,272. The Convention Committee also voted to remain with the current Dues structure for the 2025-2026 Fiscal year.

A late July Committee meeting via Zoom was called to address the VA&R Committee Budget, which was submitted after Convention. A Budget for this Committee was set at \$7,500 at the May Budget meeting. This amount was reviewed with the late-submitted Budget, and after adjusting the submitted expenditures, the Committee voted to keep the \$7,500 total Budget figure. If the Committee had increased this total, the new Budget would have to be approved by the DEC at the forthcoming 30 Day Meeting.

The closure of the Dowagiac Post at Convention and the transfer of property to the Department were also discussed. The property will be put up for sale as soon as all necessary items for transferring the property are taken care of.

At the Department Fall Meeting in Battle Creek, the Committee reviewed Resolution 25-14. This Resolution would call all Department Standing Committees to future Conventions. This Resolution was voted on to recommend rejection to the DEC.

Resolution 25-31, concerning reimbursements to Department Officers and Chairmen while performing duties AND campaigning for a Department Office at the same function was reviewed. The Committee voted to refer this Resolution back to the Author for further clarification and options.

The Dowagiac Post property sale was completed, resulting in income of \$3,465 for the Department Post Recovery Fund. There were numerous issues with the building's condition,

which resulted in the low value of the sale price.

At the December Committee Meeting at Department Headquarters, Adjutant Runyan provided updates on Raffles (a new vendor). The Fall Raffle raised more than \$41,000 for the Department. He also gave an update on the ongoing Audit process.

The Post-Recovery Grants Program Application was presented by Mike Pergande and reviewed by the Committee. It was approved and sent to the DEC for final approval.

The conversion of the Department from check writing to ACH deadline was approved for June 30. This applies to ALL Posts and Squadrons, Department Committee Members and DEC Members (Legion and SAL).

A new Budget of \$4,000 was approved for the 250th Anniversary Committee. An additional \$6,000 was approved for the Membership Committee Awards Banquet at Convention in Battle Creek in 2026.

At the Winter Meeting, the Department Employee Manual was reviewed, and a few minor updates were implemented to ensure compliance.

Finance Secretary Wanda Ophaug reported the Winter Raffle had a net profit of over \$39,000.

It was decided to support Marty's Goldenaires Drum and Bugle Corps of Bessemer Post #27 with a donation of \$10,000 from the Post #225 account. Marty's will be representing the Department and the state at the U.S. 250th Anniversary Parade in Washington D.C. on Memorial Day.

Resolution #26-05 was discussed and, after a lengthy discussion, voted to recommend Rejection to the DEC. This Resolution was for a dues increase for Veterans Scholarships.

Adjutant Runyan reported that all Department Committee Chairs are preparing their Budgets for the 2026/2027 fiscal year. The Finance Committee needs these turned in for the May 11 Budget Meeting at Department Headquarters.



## WILWIN LODGE At Cygnet Cove

**Duane Miller** Greetings, Legion  
Director of the Board Family. As we start the  
2026 Wilwin year, we have

had an overwhelming response in reservations, 200 to be exact. We tried something for veterans who had never been here before. They had 14 days of priority to make their request to stay. The word is out about our facility, and many Veterans want the experience here at Wilwin. Thanks to everyone who was flexible and adjusted their dates to stay.

It should be mentioned here that we hope everyone understands the requirements for staying at Wilwin. Due to limited resources, the number of cabins available and the days we are open in the summer, we have made the policy that the Veteran, the spouse and dependent children under 18 are eligible to reserve a stay here. We also have a no-pet policy, except for service animals that must perform a medical function for the Veteran, who can accompany our guests. Also, understand that

an animal is not a service animal until it is totally trained. Emotional support animals are not considered service animals. For more information on service animal guidance, refer to House Bill 4256, dated 2022, from the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. We thank you for your understanding.

We want to express our deepest thanks to all of the supporters and volunteers here at Wilwin. Without all of you, we wouldn't have the superior facility we have for Veterans and their families. Just in, we have received a Wilwin stamp for the passport program. Remember to bring your passport along on all your travels to get your stamps in your book.

Our open house and fundraiser this year will be on July 11th. As we have in the past, there will be food, music, and lots of fundraising activities for everyone. This is always a fun event to attend and enjoy the day with fellow Legion Family Members and other guests.

If you didn't attend Commander Clive Seydell's special project fundraising and dinner event, you all missed a great event. It was enjoyed by all who attended. Hopefully, you all know his special project is to have a dedicated fishing dock here at Wilwin.

# STEP BACK IN TIME SPRING OUTING

FREE EVENT FOR ALL SCOUTS! RANKS: ARROW OF LIGHT / CADETTES & OLDER

May 15-17, 2026

Old time skills, activities, prizes, and more!

Register at [www.wilwinlodge.com/scouting](http://www.wilwinlodge.com/scouting)



### 18th District

#### Kimberly Lambouris Commander

It has been a really busy year! This is my 2nd time as District Commander, and I decided to run again to help mentor and train the new district officers for when they move into new positions next year. My District Officers have been doing a GREAT job, and I am confident they will continue to do well in their new positions next year. They are very supportive and are willing to step up at any time and help. We have two membership drives scheduled over the next couple of weeks. The first one will be on 4/19/26 at 2 pm at the Wixom Post #224, and the 2nd one will be on May 2nd at 2 pm at the Auburn Hills Post #143. The 18th District is very supportive of American Legion Baseball, and we may only have 1 American Legion Senior Division team, but we have 8 American Legion Parks and Recreation teams this year. Next year, I expect to double those numbers. The District Elections will be held on May 17th, 2026, at Post #143, at 2 pm.

Prior to the elections, we will hold our Annual Memorial Service for all members we have lost this year, including those from the Legionnaires, Sons of the American Legion, and Auxiliary. The Memorial starts at 1:30 pm, and I want everyone in the district to send in the names of all their members who have passed. For the Legion, send those names to Ron McCall at [legion@mccalls.us](mailto:legion@mccalls.us), SAL Joe Lipman at [sandylipman95@hotmail.com](mailto:sandylipman95@hotmail.com), and Auxiliary Jackie Ellsworth at [jbellsworth@comcast.net](mailto:jbellsworth@comcast.net). If a veteran is in need, give them my cell/email: 248-910-6769, [klambo2@comcast.net](mailto:klambo2@comcast.net). You can also contact my District Service Officer, Rene "Rebel" Brzeg, at 248-275-6254. Give us a call or an email, and we will do whatever we can to help you, your post, and the community succeed! We are here for you and here to serve!

Prior to the elections, we will hold our Annual Memorial Service for all members we have lost this year, including those from the Legionnaires, Sons of the American Legion, and Auxiliary. The Memorial starts at 1:30 pm, and I want everyone in the district to send in the names of all their members who have passed. For the Legion, send those names to Ron McCall at [legion@mccalls.us](mailto:legion@mccalls.us), SAL Joe Lipman at [sandylipman95@hotmail.com](mailto:sandylipman95@hotmail.com), and Auxiliary Jackie Ellsworth at [jbellsworth@comcast.net](mailto:jbellsworth@comcast.net). If a veteran is in need, give them my cell/email: 248-910-6769, [klambo2@comcast.net](mailto:klambo2@comcast.net). You can also contact my District Service Officer, Rene "Rebel" Brzeg, at 248-275-6254. Give us a call or an email, and we will do whatever we can to help you, your post, and the community succeed! We are here for you and here to serve!



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#### \$32,700 Scholarship

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#### One Course Scholarship

One Course Scholarship: This scholarship covers the cost of tuition for one person of a member's household to take a course at Columbia Southern University.

Apply today at: <https://michiganlegion.org/csufreeclass/>

**Let Your Experience Put You Ahead. Let Our Veterans Flexible Enrollment Put You in Charge.**

Military training is one of the best ways to earn course credits. Columbia Southern University offers complimentary transfer credit evaluation and our Veterans Flexible Enrollment option empowers you to earn your degree at your own pace. Our dedicated military support staff is ready to ensure you make the most of your training and time at CSU.

**Caleb Mims**  
B.S. Information Systems and Cyber Security

**COLUMBIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY**

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### The American Legion Membership Application


I certify that I served at least one day of active military duty since December 7, 1941 and was honorably discharged or am still serving honorably.

**Please check appropriate service era and branch of service below**

<input type="checkbox"/> Global War on Terror	<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Army
<input type="checkbox"/> Gulf War	<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Navy
<input type="checkbox"/> Panama	<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Air Force
<input type="checkbox"/> Lebanon/Grenada	<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Marines
<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnam	<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Space Force
<input type="checkbox"/> Korea	<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Coast Guard
<input type="checkbox"/> WWII	<input type="checkbox"/> Merchant Marines (WWII only)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Conflicts	

(Name) \_\_\_\_\_ (Date of Birth) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Mailing Address) \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone Number) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (City) \_\_\_\_\_ (State) \_\_\_\_\_ (Zip) \_\_\_\_\_ (Post #) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (E-mail) \_\_\_\_\_ (Gender)  Male  Female (Dues) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_




### America 250 Committee Brett Holt, Committee Chairman

The 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence is less than three months away.

Your committee is preparing to set up registration for any post or district planning an event on the Fourth of July. Similar to the passport program, a registration will be available on the department's website soon.

If your community is planning to hold Fourth of July programs, we encourage you to participate.

In cooperation with the MI 250 America committee, we will provide a proclamation to be presented to your communities and counties.

Additionally, we are asking all posts to read the Declaration of Independence in its entirety on July eighth. July eighth is the day the Declaration of Independence was first read publicly in the state square, now known as Independence Hall, by Colonial John Nixon. If you cannot arrange for a reading on the eighth, but are holding a July Fourth program, reading the Declaration of Independence will suffice.

Links to both the proclamation and the Declaration of Independence will be available on the department website. A Constant Contact with both links will also be sent to all posts via email.





## Chaplain's Corner

Mike Schlaack, Chaplain

"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the

Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 17:6, emphasis added).

Wouldn't it be nice if we could truly understand what each person is thinking? We would not have to guess about someone's motives; we would know for certain exactly what was in their heart. We could then pass judgment on that person without concern that we might be wrong. But things are not as cut and dry as they may seem. The adage "Never judge a book by its cover" reminds us that there is often more to the story than meets the eye.

In our rush to judgment, we do not take the time necessary to understand the reasoning behind someone's actions fully. We tend to confuse a person's method with their motive. We don't like the way someone said or did something, so we assume they have hateful, malicious intentions. There's no possibility we didn't fully understand all that went into the decision. All we see is the perceived negative impact of the actions, and therefore, we are justified in pronouncing our judgment. Since their words or actions hurt our feelings, their intention must be evil-spirited and directed against us.

How would we feel if our actions were judged by the same standard we use to judge others? What if people judged my motives by how I approached a problem—would I be able to bear the ridicule of someone who had absolutely no idea of my reasons behind my methods? By becoming the judge of another person's heart, we assume the role that belongs to God alone. Christians are taught that how we judge others will be by the same measure that we ourselves are judged (Matt. 7:1-5; Luke 6:37). This should be a warning to those who believe they can understand a person's true motives by their methods.

Unless God has asked for your help, leave the judging of the human heart to Him alone, and try to better understand the complexity of the situation before pronouncing judgment. Maybe spend some time getting to know the heart of the person you perceive as the offender before casting your stones. The world will be a much better place when we have fewer judges.

## Great Lakes National Cemetery Advisory Council Report

PDC Steve Striggow, Liaison

The New Director at GLNC, Rodney Heard Jr., was introduced at the January Advisory Council meeting. He was previously the Director at the Fort Custer National Cemetery in Battle Creek.

Director Heard reported that the NCA Complexity Model is made up of 4 levels. GLNC is in Level 2 and ranks #10 out of 157 cemeteries. In the Midwest District, GLNC is #2. In terms of size, GLNC is #12 (544 acres) and #3 in the Midwest District.

The new bathrooms at the cemetery are finally complete. Funeral Shelter #4 has not yet been turned over to the cemetery for use. When shelter #4 becomes available, shelters 1 & 2 will be refurbished one at a time. While those shelters are being refurbished, golf carts will be available for the Honor Guards to travel to Shelter 4.

On November 17th, the flags on the Avenue of Flags were changed from Cotton Burial Flags to Polyester All-Weather Flags. On December 29th, the avenue was reduced to 56 flags. This is done each year during the severe winter weather to keep maintenance and costs under control. On March 30th, the avenue was restored to 100 flags. On May 18th, the Avenue will revert to Cotton Burial Flags. Families of veterans have donated some of the Cotton Burial Flags for use on the Avenue. When flags are donated, they receive a Certificate of Appreciation from the cemetery. Last year, the Advisory Council purchased 200 Cotton Burial Flags and 200 Polyester All-Weather Flags. All the maintenance on the Avenue of Flags is done each Monday at 0930 by a group of volunteers. All flags needing repair or retirement are replaced with a serviceable flag. We hold several flag retirement ceremonies throughout the year to keep up with the flags we retire. The Great Lakes National Cemetery Advisory Council has fundraisers and accepts donations to purchase flags, maintain the 100 flagpoles on the avenue, and support other activities we provide support for. In 2024, the Council spent over \$68,000.00 to refurbish the 100 flagpoles on the avenue. Yes, we purchase the flags we use from Emblem Sales.

The Advisory Council also provides snacks for the Honor Guards and VSO meetings. It puts on all the ceremonies and Headstone Cleaning at the cemetery. The cemetery only provides a place to do them. The cemetery does not provide anything other than burials. Wreaths Across America has no connection with the advisory council or the cemetery.

There were 236 burials in March, and 1607 this fiscal year (starting on October 1st, 2025). Since opening on September 17th 2005, there have been a total of 73,614 burials.

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LEGION

DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN

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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.*

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DignityMichigan.com

# Passport Post Spotlight Boat and Canoe Post 258

The Passport Program is getting rave reviews and is accomplishing exactly what it is supposed to do – Get the Legion Family visiting posts and having fun. This month's Passport Post spotlight is on the "Boat and Canoe" Post 258 in Grand Rapids.

Nestled along the Grand River just north of downtown Grand Rapids, the



American Legion Boat and Canoe Club is more than a gathering place—it's a thriving community hub dedicated to honoring veterans and celebrating fellowship. The club is home to three distinguished American Legion Posts: Carl A. Johnson Post 2, Valley City Post 356 and Gerald R. Ford Post 258, named for the President who was a member of the Post, having joined in 1945 and remained a member until his passing. His first Lady Betty Ford was a lifetime member of Unit 258.

Post 2 holds the honor of being Michigan's oldest Legion post, founded in 1919, while Post 258 is the nation's only maritime-exclusive post, and Post 356 stands among the largest in District 5. Together, along with an Auxiliary, Sons of the Legion Squadron, Legion Riders, and a VFW Post, they create an active family of service and camaraderie.

The club's ballroom and riverside patio offer breathtaking views of the



"Boat and Canoe" Home to three posts  
Carl A. Johnson Post 2, Valley City Post 356 and  
Gerald R. Ford Post 258

Veterans Memorial Bridge and the Grand River—perfect for catching fireworks or summertime flyovers. Inside, friendly bartenders and longtime members like the legendary Joe Rogers make every visit welcoming.

Throughout the year, there are signature events and community initiatives that showcase the club's dedication. The annual 3rd of July Family Party combines live music, food, fireworks, and patriotism. The club also leads the 22 A Day veteran suicide awareness event, supports Talons Out Honor Flight Michigan, and partners with Community Rebuilders to help veterans secure housing. Their Legion

Riders host the popular Biker Burger Nights, while local Scouts and craft groups find a home under the club's roof.

Visitors shouldn't miss the WWII Memorial Stone, the historic Canon de 155 GPF mle 1917 the revolutionary French heavy field gun, or the massive American flag that graces the Riverside Ballroom.



The Memorial Stone from the original intersection, and the Canon De 155 GPF

Above all, the American Legion Boat and Canoe Club is known for supporting veterans and their families—a living testament to service, remembrance, and community spirit that continues to thrive in the heart of Grand Rapids.

Visit [boatcanoe.com](http://boatcanoe.com) for hours, events, and more ways to get involved.



L-R: Roger Deaton, Katie Setten, Mark Chamberlain, Scott Christie, Bob Porter, Migeal Berrios, Bob Chapin, Joe Rogers, Bob Crans, Rick Ringersma, Kim Lang

See Other Passport Posts or Register at <https://michiganlegion.org/passport/>

## Due to a misprint in the April Legionnaire, this is the official publication of Proposed Amendment 26-CA-05

**A proposed change to the Department Bylaws, Article V Department Officers, Section 1:**

Currently reads:

Department Commander shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Department and shall be empowered and directed to do such acts as may be necessary and proper to conduct the business of the Department. The Department Commander shall preside at the Annual Convention and at all meetings of the Department Executive Committee and shall issue all necessary orders and may direct the Adjutant or any other Department Officer, when necessary, to proceed to any place on American Legion business. The Department Commander shall appoint all standing committees, subject to approval of the Department Executive Committee, except as otherwise provided. The Department Commander shall represent the Department in all of its relations with the federal, state and local government and with the people of the State of Michigan. The Department Commander shall see that all provisions of the National Constitution and Bylaws and all policies established under them are duly

observed. The Department Commander shall be reimbursed up to the budget allowance for necessary actual travel expenses while in performance of the duties of the office, with any additional funding to be determined by the Finance/ Personnel Committee, subject to the approval of the Department Executive Committee and shall not serve more than one (1) consecutive term.

**To be Amended by:**

Adding between Department Commander and shall represent the Department "or their designated representative"

**So that when amended Department Bylaws, Article V Department Officers, Section 1, shall read:**

Department Commander shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Department and shall be empowered and directed to do such acts as may be necessary and proper to conduct the business of the Department. The Department Commander shall preside at the Annual Convention and at all meetings of the Department Executive Committee and shall issue all necessary orders and may direct the Adjutant or any other Department Officer, when

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# More Than Marksmanship: How JSSP Builds Michigan's Next Generation

## Mark Downing, Chairman

Across Michigan, young people are discovering that success isn't measured just by points on a target. Through The American Legion's Junior Shooting Sports Program (JSSP), they're building confidence, discipline, and lifelong skills in a safe, structured environment. JSSP is first and foremost a gun-safety

and youth-development program. Using .177 caliber air rifles under trained supervision, participants learn responsibility, focus, and respect. The program emphasizes accountability and self-discipline. Participants develop concentration, patience, and goal-setting skills that carry into school and everyday life.

meaningful value to American Legion Posts by engaging families, increasing community visibility, creating volunteer opportunities, and strengthening long-term membership connections. For many Posts, launching a JSSP team has brought renewed energy and purpose, positioning the Legion as a leader in youth development.



Starting a Junior Shooting Sports Program is more accessible than many Posts expect. A basic start-up typically includes air rifles, safety equipment, targets, pellets, and a simple range setup.

Many Posts begin a program for approximately \$1,500 to \$3,500. Ongoing costs are relatively low, making JSSP sustainable long-term.

Start a team in 5 steps:

1. Build interest among local youth and families.
2. Secure a safe indoor location.
3. Recruit volunteers and coaches.
4. Gather basic equipment.
5. Register when enrollment opens in September.

Posts can receive guidance and materials through The American Legion Department of Michigan. For more information, contact Mark Downing, JSSP Sub Committee Chairman at [mi-jssp27@gmail.com](mailto:mi-jssp27@gmail.com).

The Junior Shooting Sports Program proves that while the target may be small, the impact is not. It remains a powerful way to build skills, strengthen communities, and invest in the future.



ty and youth-development program. Using .177 caliber air rifles under trained supervision, participants learn responsibility, focus, and respect. The program emphasizes accountability and self-discipline. Participants develop concentration, patience, and goal-setting skills that carry into school and everyday life.

The sport is also uniquely inclusive; boys and girls compete on equal footing, and success is based on consistency and focus rather than physical strength. Beyond personal development, JSSP offers a pathway to competition and achievement. Athletes advance through postal matches with the opportunity to qualify for the National Championship, July 14-18, at Hillsdale College.

Top competitors can earn national recognition and scholarship opportunities. Just as important, the program delivers



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The upcoming 250th birthday of the United States not only commemorates the nation's founding principles but also calls for renewing our civic responsibility and national pride. Scouting continues to strengthen the founding principles of patriotism, justice, freedom, democracy, duty to God, duty to country, and service to the community, state, and nation as it develops our leaders of tomorrow today! Among the most outstanding examples of our youth committed to these ideals are Eagle Scouts from Scouting America. These young leaders embody the very principles upon which our nation was founded.

Scouting has also been hard hit with rising costs, and we need your help now more than ever to keep this vital youth program strong, relevant, and accessible for today's youth. The "Eagle 250" campaign is asking organizations, businesses, individuals, and groups to invest in scouting with a contribution of \$250.00 to the Michigan Crossroads Council, in honor of our Nation's 250th birthday. It is the cost to sponsor one scout for the year, and our goal is 400 scouts! With your help, we can keep scouting affordable and provide youth with leadership opportunities, endless adventures and memories that will last a lifetime!

Checks should be made payable to:  
 Michigan Crossroads Council and mailed to:  
 Michigan Crossroads Council Attn: Denver Laabs  
 1776 W. Warren Ave.  
 Detroit, MI 48208



## 2026 DEPARTMENT CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM

### The American Legion Department of Michigan

### June 25 – 28, 2026

Contact Brian Mohlman with any questions at 269-579-6458  
or [smiconvcorp@gmail.com](mailto:smiconvcorp@gmail.com)

Conference Registration: **\$25 per Person**

Make your check Payable to:

**Southern Michigan Convention Corp**

or simply to: **SMCC**

Hotel Reservations are YOUR responsibility and may be made directly with our hotel:

**DoubleTree by Hilton Battle Creek**  
**50 Capital Ave SW**  
**Battle Creek, MI 49017**

Call (269) 380-0320, Group Block Code 91K  
 or [Link to Hotel Reservations](#)

Regular Rooms (2 Queen or King) - \$124 + tax  
 + **Mandatory \$5/Day Parking**  
Rate Expires at 5:00 PM 17 June 2026

Mail to: American Legion Post 257  
 7475 B Drive N  
 Battle Creek, MI 49014

**OVERFLOW HOTEL**  
**Fairfield Inn by Marriott**  
**4665 Beckley Rd**  
**Battle Creek, MI 49015**  
**Reservations:**

**Information Coming Soon**

Register & Pay Online at:  
[www.legionpost257.org/conference](http://www.legionpost257.org/conference)

Or Mail the form below...

**Please print Full Name, Address, Phone & Email:** (Registration Fee is \$25 per person)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Group:  LEGION  AUX  SAL  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/St/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Others Attending that you are Registering** (Registration Fee is \$25 per person)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Group:  LEGION  AUX  SAL  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Group:  LEGION  AUX  SAL  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Group:  LEGION  AUX  SAL

Total Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ Registrations



**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	\$ _____
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ _____</b>

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**



# AUXILIAIRE

*From the Desk of the President*

*May 2026*



**Dawn Gramza**  
Department President  
2025-2026

## ***In Service Not Self***

As May arrives, I find myself both grateful and reflective. This year has taken me across our beautiful state of Michigan, into so many of your communities, your meetings, and your hearts. Every mile traveled has reminded me just how special the American Legion Auxiliary truly is, not because of what we do, but because of who you are.

I've had the privilege of shaking your hands, hearing your stories, and witnessing your dedication firsthand. From small towns to larger communities, the love you have for our veterans, our military, and their families is unmistakable. It's in the quiet moments-visiting a veteran, supporting a military child, or simply showing up-that our mission comes to life.

May, of course, brings us to one of the most sacred days we observe, Memorial Day. For me, this day is deeply personal. Like many of you, I carry the stories of those who served and sacrificed. As the daughter and sister of veterans, I understand pride, but also the weight of service. Memorial Day is not just a date on the calendar-it is a moment of pause, to

remember, and to honor those who never made it home.

As my time as Department President begins to wind down, I've been thinking a lot about what this journey has meant to me. It was one of the greatest honors of my life. Not because of the title, but because of the people, each of you, who make this organization a family.

I am so proud of what we have accomplished together. Proud of the way you've stepped up, supported one another, and continued to carry forward our mission with strength and compassion. You inspire me more than you know.

As we move into these final months of the Auxiliary year, I encourage you to keep going. Keep reaching out. Keep inviting others to join us. Keep telling your story. Because what we do matters and the future of our organization depends on each of us continuing that work.

From the bottom of my heart. Thank you for your kindness, your dedication, and your unwavering support throughout this year. I will carry these memories with me always.



**Shannon Werner**  
Executive Director,  
Secretary-Treasurer

## ***Answers and Information***

**Where do I send our updated standing rules? When is Girls State this year? What are the scholarship deadlines?**- All of these can be answered by reviewing the program guides related to each program and

listed on our website at [www.michalaux.org](http://www.michalaux.org) under program guides. You can also find the contact information for the specific Program Chairman.

End of Year Reports-Units send them to District Presidents and District chairs (if one exists), District Presidents send them to Department Program Chairs, Department Program Chairs send them to the Department President and email a copy to [info@michalaux.org](mailto:info@michalaux.org).

Incorrect member names-contact the member, District level representative, area membership representative:

Districts 9, 10 & 19,-Ruch Gott at [moseley11@icloud.com](mailto:moseley11@icloud.com)

Districts 2 & 16,-Carla Pohl at [clpohl1@comcast.net](mailto:clpohl1@comcast.net)

Districts 6, 7, 8, & 18-Shylynn Jones at [raven14378@gmail.com](mailto:raven14378@gmail.com)

Districts 3, 4, & 5-Candie Chase at [dcchase85@comcast.net](mailto:dcchase85@comcast.net)

Or Department Membership Chair, this year Carol Burke who can be reached at [ck323@msn.com](mailto:ck323@msn.com).

**Could you look up a membership number? Could you confirm this list of members are in ALAMIS?**- See above.

**Will the dues be raised by Department or National?**- Questions about EIN or non-profit status and how to resolve issues related to same. Contact your Department Finance chair Deanna Cortright at [dcndc4ever@yahoo.com](mailto:dcndc4ever@yahoo.com).

**Could you look up the number and address of a member and provide it to me?**- We do not give out our members personal information. These questions are delegated to members who have volunteered to assist.

**Could you look up the deceased members of my Unit, District, etc. for a certain period of time?** You can contact your Unit or District Chaplain. If they cannot help then you can reach out to the Department Chaplain.

Poppies are available for sale all year around. The orders are filled and shipped weekly. The order form is on our website at [www.michalaux.org](http://www.michalaux.org). Fill it out completely, attach a check and send it to the address listed on the form.

**Could you send me some pamphlets, membership cards, transmittals?**- The order form for supplies is on our website at [www.michalaux.org](http://www.michalaux.org) fill out the form, attach a check for the postage, currently \$10.00 and send to the address listed on same.

**I lost my membership card, can you send me a new one?**- Any member can print their own membership card from the National website at [www.alaforveterans.org](http://www.alaforveterans.org). If you don't have an account, you must create an account in order to access the member options.

## Chesterfield Township MVH

*Marie Gomez, VA&R Representative*

As MVH Chesterfield approaches its 5 year anniversary on May 17, 2026, we reflect with deep gratitude on the Veterans who call this place home and the incredible community that surrounds them. Since opening, the home has proudly served Veterans across Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne Counties. With room for 128 members and 122 currently residing including six remarkable women, MVH Chesterfield continues to provide exceptional short and long term care, rehabilitation, dementia and memory care, and palliative services. For most, this place is simply "home."

We have been busy creating the SNOEZELEN Room, a soothing multi sensory space offering light, sound, aromatherapy, tactile elements, and calming visuals. It is especially comforting for Veterans with PTSD or those needing a peaceful escape. The American Legion Auxiliary Department Executive Committee unanimously voted to outfit this important therapeutic room with everything necessary to bring the vision to life.

We are blessed to have approx. 17 American Legion Family "registered" MVH volunteers, including seven new faces this year. Their kindness shows up in countless ways: restaurant outings, picnics, game nights, trivia, movie nights,

bowling, church visits, shopping trips, and simply sitting with Veterans who appreciate a friendly presence.

In February, we were honored to welcome National President Pam Ray and Department President Dawn Gramza for a tour led by Kip, MVH Chesterfield's very first resident, who proudly shared his personal living space. Hilary Kuretech, MVH Coordinator for Volunteers & Donations, shared a heartfelt note: "We are extremely grateful for the support from the American Legion Auxiliary. Your generosity and dedication make a lasting difference in the lives of our veterans." Her words echo what so many of us feel: your service matters, and it is seen!

Looking ahead, please join us for our Memorial Day celebration on Monday, May 25, 2026 and MVH's 5th Annual 5K Walk, Run & Roll on Saturday, June 6, 2026. To join my email list, please contact [marie.gomez@comcast.net](mailto:marie.gomez@comcast.net) so you don't miss out on any ALA related events.

As we enter the 2026-2027 season, I invite you to consider how you or your Unit might continue supporting our mission through donations, volunteering, or becoming a registered MVH volunteer. Every act of kindness strengthens the community our Veterans deserve.

Please continue to keep our Veterans in your prayers. Together, we will keep our Mission Possible. Many blessings to all.

## 4th District Auxiliary Update

*Kathie Hartman-Gleason*

As a District President, there is always the day-to-day work of supporting our units which is expected. However, I have also had to address challenges that pull focus from our mission that include concerns about missing funds, weak financial controls, bullying, "stacking" meetings for a specific desired outcome, Units who are not following proper procedures and individuals attempting to control the work of others rather than serve alongside them.

Common problems include spending without approved minutes, withdrawing cash instead of writing checks (which reduces documentation), and running cash fundraisers or events with little recordkeeping. Please remember that Auxiliary funds are to support veterans and must be voted on by all those members in attendance at any given meeting. It is heartbreaking to see how quickly things break down when the members of a Unit quit working together and lose sight of our mission.

Moving forward, we must follow our standing rules, bylaws and best practices. This includes keeping approved meeting minutes and treasurer reports so there is a clear record of what has been voted on and approved by the members. The lack of documentation can cause confusion, misunderstandings and in severe cases, missing funds that could assist a Veteran in need.

Despite the obstacles, I am proud of the progress made this year. My biggest accomplishment has been opening a new Auxiliary at Walter Hackenberg Post 220 in Lawton, Michigan. I want to thank Lyle Paterota-Streeter, a Legionnaire from the post, who provided tremendous support in getting everything up and running. After months of work, the effort resulted in a wonderful success, with their first Auxiliary meeting held in November 2025. Congratulations to our newly chartered Auxiliary Unit 220, we look forward to all the good work you will do in the future.

Our purpose is clear. We are here for multiple mission possible goals: to support veterans, service members, military families and their communities. Stay focused on the mission and we can't fail. It ultimately strengthens the Legion family and ensures the work we do provides much needed support to those who have served.

## Chaplains Corner

*Dawn Gilbert, Chaplain*

It's May, the beginning of rebirth and growth, with spring now in full swing across the great state of Michigan. Some areas may be slower to bloom than others, but warmer temperatures are finally here statewide. With the flowers beginning to bloom, we're reminded of the hope and promise of the summer ahead.

May is also a busy and meaningful month for many of our American Legion Posts and Auxiliary Units as they prepare for Memorial Day ceremonies and observances. If you are an Auxiliary member with a spouse or partner in the American Legion, you know that Memorial Day is not merely a long weekend of relaxation, it is a solemn time to remember and honor those veterans and service members who are no longer with us.

Auxiliary members may serve as part of the color guard, participate directly in ceremonies, or support these events behind the scenes by providing refreshments back at the Post once the program concludes. No matter how you support these observances, whether front and center or working quietly in the background, your service matters, and I thank you for your dedication.

This Memorial Day will be especially poignant as we reflect on the recent loss of six Army Reserve soldiers in the Middle East. Please keep their families in your prayers, asking for comfort and peace during this difficult time. We also pray that the Lord watches over our service members currently deployed and grants them safe passage home.

I would also like to sincerely thank those who have shared prayers for Madame President Dawn's Prayer Book. Your kindness is truly appreciated. If you haven't yet submitted a prayer, there is still time. I welcome any and all of your favorite prayers and would be honored to include them. You may send them via email or traditional mail, whatever is most convenient for you. Thank you for all you do in service to our veterans, our communities, and one another.

Email: [dawn Gilbert21@aol.com](mailto:dawn Gilbert21@aol.com) Mail: 11667 Coster Rd. SW, Fife Lake, MI 49633.

January 25, 2026

At a regular scheduled meeting of the 18<sup>th</sup> District American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Michigan. We voted to endorse Darlene Jones to the position of Department Chaplain for the year 2026-2027.

Darlene is a dedicated member and continues to be an active Auxiliary Member of the 18<sup>th</sup> District American Legion Auxiliary. She has a strong military family background through her father, Leroy Puckett, a Korean War Veteran, her brother LeRoy Joseph Puckett (Joe), and Army Veteran John David Puckett. She is committed to serving veterans and their families and has proven her loyalty through forty years of selfless giving.

Darlene has held every office at the unit level and has served on the Audit Committee, and many chairmanships: AEF, Americanism, Children & Youth, Community Service, Homeless Veterans Service Coordinator, Junior, Legislative, Membership, Music, Past Presidents Parley, Poppy Chairman. Darlene has served these at the unit level many times. Special Chairmanship for over thirteen years, she Chaired the Muscular Dystrophy Benefit and would present the check along with our juniors or poppy girls on the local telethon.

Darlene has served the 18<sup>th</sup> District holding all office's and has served as Audit Committee, and many Chairmanships, AEF, Americanism, Children & Youth, Community Service, Girl's State, Handicapped and Disabled Children's fund, Homeless Veterans Service Coordinator, Juniors, Membership, Music, Past Presidents Parley, Poppy's, and has served as a mentor to new members.

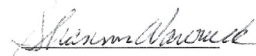
At the Department level, Darlene has served on the Credential Committee, Education Committee, Eastern Area Membership Chairman, Hospital Director, Homeless Veterans Service Coordinator, Junior Committee and Junior Chairman, Membership Chairman, and Teller. Darlene has also served on many other committees, and this year is serving as the Department Historian.

Darlene has collaborated with other Veterans' organizations on numerous memorial services to honor our veterans. Darlene has two children and many grandchildren, all of whom are active members in the American Legion Auxiliary. She is willing to help anyone and is a great mentor, and very knowledgeable about our programs

The 18<sup>th</sup> District asks for your support of Darlene Jones for the office of Department of Michigan American Legion Auxiliary Chaplain for the years 2026-2027.

The 18<sup>th</sup> District respectfully submits the Name of Darlene Jones for the position of Department Historian of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Michigan. We thank you for your consideration.

  
Sharon Therrien  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

  
Shannon Wawruck  
18<sup>th</sup> District Secretary



# 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.AL4forVeterans.org](http://www.AL4forVeterans.org)

## Public Relations at the Unit Level

*Suzanne Knapp, Public Relations Chair*

In the heart of Michigan, members of the American Legion Auxiliary are quietly but powerfully making an impact—supporting veterans, uplifting military families, and strengthening the community through dedicated service. As part of one of the nation's most respected veteran support organizations, members ensure veterans feel recognized and supported year-round.

Effective public relations at the unit level are essential to building awareness, fostering community trust, and strengthening the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA). By communicating clearly and consistently, local units play a key role in sharing the story of a community of volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families.

A strong public relations strategy begins with organization and preparation. Units are encouraged to develop and maintain an up-to-date media contact list, including local reporters, radio personalities, and community news outlets. Keeping this information current ensures that unit events, initiatives, and success stories can be shared widely and effectively. Utilizing tools such as the PR Guide, branding guide and volunteer recruitment resources help streamline this process and sets units up for long-term success.

Building brand loyalty is another important focus. Consistent use of the American Legion Auxiliary name, emblem, and messaging across all platforms reinforces recognition and credibility. Whether through newsletters, websites, or digital communication, maintaining a professional and unified presence helps communities better understand and

connect with the Auxiliary's mission.

In today's digital world, social media has become one of the most powerful tools for outreach. Units are encouraged to create, improve, and actively maintain social media pages to highlight their work and engage with the public. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and others offer free and effective ways to promote events, share photos, and celebrate accomplishments.

However, with this visibility comes responsibility. Every post represents the American Legion Auxiliary and should reflect its values. Thoughtful, respectful, and mission-focused content helps maintain a positive image. As the saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words" images shared online should accurately and positively capture the spirit of service and community involvement.

It is also important to follow key guidelines in all communications. Always refer to the organization as the American Legion Auxiliary, not "ladies auxiliary," to preserve the integrity of the brand. Additionally, sensitive issues or concerns should never be addressed on public platforms; instead, they should be handled privately and respectfully in person.

A unified voice builds the foundation for a stronger mission. Public relations is not just the responsibility of one role, it is a shared effort among all members. By working together to communicate effectively, maintain professionalism, and promote the Auxiliary's mission, units can enhance their visibility and impact within their communities.

Through thoughtful outreach, strong branding, and responsible communication, American Legion Auxiliary units continue to build lasting connections and ensure their message of service reaches those who need it most.

**AMERICAN  
LEGION**

**AUXILIARY**

*A Community of Volunteers Serving  
Veterans, Military, and their Families*



Hello, Fellow American Legion Auxiliary Members:

It's hard to believe how far we are into the 2025-2026 administrative year. I've so enjoyed all of my department visits and look forward to many more as we remain Mission Driven, Family Focused.

Seeing departments working well together as an American Legion Family warms my heart. We need to continue working side by side to serve our collective missions focused on our veterans, military, and their families.

Please continue focusing on the two American Legion Family-focused initiatives: 1) a citation for a unit, post, squadron, or chapter that organizes, carries out, and submits a report of a project in your community that includes the whole Family; and 2) the "Family Three" award — recruit three ALA members, three Legionnaires, and three Sons of The American Legion members. This is open to members from the entire American Legion Family. Entries will come through the Auxiliary.

I appreciate everyone who has donated to this year's ALA national fundraising focus: our Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund. Please continue to support youth through your fundraising efforts. You can easily donate by texting SPIRIT to 1-844-940-3450 or online at [www.ALAforVeterans.org/scholarships/spirit-of-youth](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org/scholarships/spirit-of-youth).

I hope you use your time at this department convention to motivate and inspire each other, continue learning new and improved ways to work our mission, and make new friends from different parts of your state.

Together, we can do more to be Mission Driven and Family Focused, always putting our veterans, military, and their families first. Have a great department convention and I hope to see you in Louisville, Ky, at our 2026 National Convention in August!

*Pam Ray*

Pam Ray  
2025-2026 National President

## Let's get Ready to Celebrate!

*Carol Burke, Membership Chair*

As we enter the final months of Operation 250 Candles of Mission Possible and begin preparations to celebrate achieving 100% goal membership by July 4th, there is an internal challenge of growing our membership to 30,000 by August 1st, 2026, which is 103.5% of our goal.

To reach this target, we must focus on renewals and on attracting both new members and those whose memberships lapsed before December 31st, 2025.

As I mentioned in the March edition of the Auxiliaire, making these calls may feel daunting. Yet, sharing the task among several people instead of just one makes it more personal and manageable. Always remember: "Membership is everyone's responsibility." Get everyone involved in membership efforts. Please check the Membership Toolbox that was provided at the Winter Conference for sample scripts and resources. You can also find it posted on our Facebook page, MI ALA Membership.

Involving everyone in membership activities can also be assisted by encouraging members to participate in National's two member awards: the Recruit/Rejoin 10 and the Family 3 award. The forms are available on the Department's website, [michalaux.org](http://michalaux.org), under the fast find > membership > member awards tab, which contains the guidelines and a link to the forms. And yes, one new member qualifies to be used for both awards. Additionally, one individual can be used on the Family 3 award if they join all three organizations.

I encourage all members to develop an elevator speech, a brief verbal approach to a prospective member. This 30-second approach explains why you are a member and invites the prospect to learn more. More details and a sample script are available in the Membership Toolbox distributed at the winter Conference and on Facebook: MI ALA Membership.

By engaging new members, retaining current ones, and getting everyone involved in membership activities, we'll build vibrant and dynamic Units. These energetic Units will fulfill our mission to serve veterans, military personnel, and their families in our communities. The strength of a Unit's membership is its heartbeat, helping us achieve any mission. Let's celebrate!

**The Following National Security Article was Scheduled to run in the April Addition. It's delay was unintentional**

## National Security

*Debbie Weatherbee, Chair*

At a recent Zoom Meeting with National Security National Chairman Norma Tramm, Departments were asked to help the Department of Kansas send care packages to troops on active duty. The Department of Kansas was unable to meet the demand. Unfortunately, once the plea to our Department of Michigan members went out, I was informed that the APO zip code could no longer accept packages. I wish we could move forward with this effort, but it has been put on hold. I want to thank all of you who responded and were so willing to support our active-duty military.

This year, National Security will share stories of active-duty service members each Wednesday. Each mem-

ber has an opportunity to provide us with the story of someone from the Department of Michigan or a family member. It is simply to ask a service member to fill out the questions and submit them to ALA National-National Security. The link is below, and there are only a few questions. Let's make the Dept. of Michigan proud and get as many submitted as we can [https://legion-aux.formstack.com/forms/stories\\_of\\_servicemembers\\_and\\_their\\_families](https://legion-aux.formstack.com/forms/stories_of_servicemembers_and_their_families)

Lastly, please consider nominating a military service member for the "Service Member of the Year Award". If they are chosen, they can attend the National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, to receive this award. All the details are on the National Website. I would be happy to help in any way to get a servicemember nominated for this wonderful award from the Department of Michigan.

Thank you for all your help in making the National Security program shine!

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

**Send your articles and Pictures (with Outline) to : [info@michalaux.org](mailto:info@michalaux.org)**



# Sons of The American Legion Detachment of Michigan

CLIVE R.A. SEYDELL

Detachment Commander 2025-2026



Recently, I had the opportunity to visit American Legion Reino Post 21 alongside Past Detachment Commander Beeman and Zone Commander Pendell. During our visit, the squadron presented me with a beautiful commemorative paddle recognizing my year as Detachment Commander and my Special Project at Wilwin Lodge. It was a meaningful gesture that I truly appreciate. We even managed to squeeze in a little ice fishing, making it a great day of fellowship and camaraderie.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the tremendous success of our Detachment Commander's Special Project fundraiser dinner. With over 150 people in attendance, the evening was a great success, raising approximately \$15,000 in support of the Wilwin Dock Project. I cannot thank everyone enough who made this event possible, those who attended, the generous donors who contributed items and support, and the many volunteers who worked behind the scenes to ensure everything ran smoothly. The outpouring of support truly shows the strength of our organization. Thanks to all of you, our efforts to build a barrier-free fishing dock at Wilwin Lodge continue to move forward in a very positive direction.

As we continue through the membership year, I want to highlight where we stand and where we need to go. As of April 10, we are at 92.12% of our membership goal, with our next major target being 100% by May 13, 2026. We are within striking distance, but now is the time to push hard. Every squadron should be focused on reaching out to members who have not yet renewed and ensuring no one is left behind. Let's finish strong and achieve our goal together.

I also recently had the honor of attending National Commander Clancy's Homecoming in New York. It was an outstanding event filled with great camaraderie and an opportunity to connect with leaders from across the country. Seeing the strength and unity of our organization at the national level reinforces the important work we are doing here in Michigan.

Looking ahead, don't forget to get registered for the Detachment Convention in June at Houghton Lake. This is our time to come together, conduct the business of the Detachment, and celebrate our accomplishments. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Finally, I want to strongly encourage all squadrons to submit articles and photos to the Michigan Legionnaire. This is one of the best ways we can showcase the incredible work happening across our Detachment. Whether it's chicken barbecues, steak dinners, Children & Youth fundraisers, or community support efforts like school donations, these stories matter. Let's make sure we are telling them.

Together, let's keep the momentum going, finish the membership year strong, share our successes, and continue making a difference in our communities.



## TIME TO REMEMBER Greg Price, Detachment Adjutant

As many times the weather has changed lately, it is difficult to figure out what season we are in. One thing is for sure: our Legion Family members seem to create a continuous season of helping and giving in their communities.

Some posts assist the Boy Scout troops in their community in whatever manner is practical. Many posts will help someone in their community who needs home repairs or yard cleanup after severe weather has damaged trees. We have seen Legion Family Members Ringing a Bell by a Red Kettle in hopes of making a child's Christmas a little happier. I am sure that many of you have other wonderful stories to share about special Legion family members at your post.

One person who has worked hard in hopes of making his dreams of his Special Project come true is our Detachment Commander Clive Seydell. He would like to see a dedicated fishing dock at Wilwin at Cygnet Cove. He believes that it could be a place of peace, healing, and purpose for veterans and their families. In March, with the help of many volunteers, a Special Project Fundraiser Dinner was held. The evening was fun and amazing. There were so many prizes donated by businesses and individuals from all over Michigan that the evening was filled with various auctions and raffles. Those who helped run

the games and do the other events worked extremely hard to make it a success.

Squadrons have also been working hard to fulfill their membership goals. They have been contacting members who have not renewed their membership. You can see the reward of their efforts by seeing that Michigan is in 20th place in the National Membership Target out of 50 Detachments. We are also in 4th place in the Central Division at almost 92% of our goal.

Squadrons have been reaching out and trying to compile a list of any of their members who have passed away within the last year, so that their names may be read in Honor at a Memorial Service that may be held at an upcoming Post or District ceremony. Our Detachment Chaplain, David Seydell, is putting together a list of names to be read at our State Convention Memorial Service, to be held in June at Houghton Lake. If your Squadron has had any member pass away, please send their names to Dave at [davidseydell@yahoo.com](mailto:davidseydell@yahoo.com). Those names will also be read at our National Convention Memorial Service in Louisville to be held August 28-September 3, 2026.

I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with my S.A.L. brothers as we let others know that we are Proud possessors of a priceless heritage, and male descendants of veterans of all Wars.

2026 SAL Membership: April 24<sup>th</sup> Goal = 29,227  
Current Total: 27,467 - 93.98%

PROUD POSSESSORS OF A PRICELESS HERITAGE  
**COMMANDER SEYDELL MAKING THE ROUNDS**



Commander Seydell visiting Post 21 with his ceremonial Paddle.



Commander Seydell and First Lady Stephanie in New York, attending the National Commander's homecoming

**Field Fans** **AMERICAN LEGION**  
 DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN

HONOR OUR VETERANS WITH THE NEW, MICHIGAN LEGION FAMILY BLANKET! A BEAUTIFUL YET PRACTICAL ADDITION TO ANY HOME. PROUDLY MADE IN THE U.S.A. THIS \$79.95 BLANKET IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE COMFORT WHILE SHOWCASING YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY--ALL EMBLEMS AVAILABLE

IT'S COLD OUT THERE! GRAB A BLANKET!

ORDER YOURS TODAY

THE AMERICAN LEGION **FAMILY**

**GLADWIN IS MAKING IT HAPPEN**

The Gladwin County Post 171 held an Open House on March 23rd to celebrate the American Legion's 107th Anniversary. There were free hot dogs, chips, a large cake and lots of cookies made by the Auxiliary.

During the Open House, veterans who attended were asked to stand, introduce themselves and share a brief history of their service. They also received a special Veteran's Challenge Coin.

We also highlighted our new mural dedicated to the American Legion. This is the first thing you see as you enter Gladwin from the north.

Our Post, in conjunction with the Veterans Affairs Office, has initiated a "COFFEE WITH A VET" on the first Tuesday of the month at the Post. It's held from 0900 to 1200 hrs, and coffee and donuts are provided, along with representatives from the Veterans Affairs Office and others from various organizations



One of the many Veterans we visited. I'm on the left (Jim Volant, Commander) with Dave Neubauer, First Vice.

that assist Veterans.

From our programs, we have gained some new members. During Christmas, we went to all the assisted living homes in the county and presented Veterans living there with a package containing toiletries, reading and writing materials and a blanket. The Veterans shared some of their history with us, and before we left, we came to attention and saluted them for their service.

Our Post also has an exemplary Honor Guard.





### 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](mailto: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](mailto:al.vbadet@va.gov)

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Check out all your benefits at  
[www.mivabenefits.org](http://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

## District Meetings

**First District**  
TBD  
Thurs of every month meal @ 5:30 pm & meeting @ 7 pm.

**Second District**  
Meetings start at 11 am with the SAL followed by Riders at Noon with a Lunch VSO training at 1 pm and Legion at 2 pm  
**May 17, 2026**  
Blissfield Post 325

**Third District**  
Lunch is at 11 am, and Meeting at Noon.  
**May 3rd 2026**  
at Post 36, Kalamazoo

**Fourth District**  
Meetings begin at 1:00 pm.  
**May 17 2026**  
Diamond Island Post 335

**Fifth District**  
Meetings are on the 2nd

**Eighth District**  
Trainings will start at Noon, Dinner at 1:00pm with Legion and Auxiliary meetings immediately following  
**May 3, 2026**  
Portland Post 129  
1324 E. Bridge Street  
Portland, Michigan 48875  
Phone: (517) 647-4980

**Ninth District**  
Executive meetings are at 11:00am with Lunch at noon. Meetings at 1:00 pm  
**May 9, 2026**  
Post 221 Frankfort

**Tenth District**  
All meetings will start with lunch at noon. Meetings at 1:00 pm.  
**May 7, 2026**  
Post 404, 1267 M-61  
Harrison MI 48625

**Eleventh District**  
All Meetings Start at 10 am, with Lunch to after.  
TBD

**Twelfth District**  
Coffee and Doughnuts at 9, meeting at 10 am, with a lunch and additional hour after lunch if needed.  
TBD

**Sixteenth District**  
All meetings start at 7:30 pm  
**May 12th, 2025 \*\***  
Lincoln Park Post 67  
Phone: 313-388-2088  
**June 10th, 2025**  
Garden City 396  
Phone: 313-381-2245  
\* Service Officer School at 6:30 pm  
\*\*Memorial Service & Elections

**Eighteenth District**  
All meetings Meeting for the District Legion and Auxiliary Convene at 2:00 pm.  
**May 17, 2026**  
Holt Post 143, 95 Church St.  
Auburn Hills, MI  
Phone: 248-852-4880

**Nineteenth District**  
Training at 10:00 am, Social Meet and Greet at 11:00 am, lunch served at noon. The both the Legion and Auxiliary will start at 12:30 pm. All meetings will be held at:  
The Landing Zone  
Gaylord Bowling Center  
1200 Gornick Ave, Gaylord, MI 49735.  
**May 9, 2026**

# Around the State...

## Korean War Veteran Receives Honored by Post

The American Legion Coleman A. Young Post 202 Officers and members gathered this week to honor one of their own. In a heartfelt ceremony, the Post proudly presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Maurice Wallingford, a member whose tenure spanned more than 50 years and whose dedication began during the Korean War.



## Riders Unite

Brighton Post 235 and the crew at the Spirit Center hosted the visiting ALR 510 crew from the Stockbridge post! Thank you for stopping at Brighton Post 235 on your plaque run.



## The Legion Family Celebrates St. Patrick's Day with Bingo At American Legion Post 29



LR: David Cox SAL, Sandy Price Auxiliary, Tonya Pritchard Auxiliary, Michael Pritchard SAL, and Chris Lapinski SAL



LR: Members of Post 29 Dennis Keeder & Rick Handy

## New Officers at Post 105



District Commander Rodney Tolbert does the honors in Benton Harbor Post 105.

## Francis Barlow Post 95 Cheboygan



The April Veterans Coffee Hour had a nice turnout; some of the snowbirds are starting to come back north.

## Grosse Pointe Post 303 Celebrates a Milestone

At 102 years old, Larry Bennett stands as a remarkable living testament to the "Greatest Generation". The World War II veteran remains a pillar of his community and a dedicated member of the American Legion.



Larry Bennett  
102th DOB

## Joshua McAllister, Commander of Post 282 in Ypsilanti, hosted and moderated a Town Hall featuring Dr. Paul Lawrence, Deputy Secretary of Veteran Affairs



L-R: Dr. Lawrence, Joshua McAllister Post 282 Commander

Post 282 Ypsilanti opened its doors to all veterans and Families to get answers from the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. Paul Lawrence. Also available was Dr. Ginny Creasman, Director of the VA in Ann Arbor, seen here standing at far right. Questions were welcomed from anyone in attendance, and the information was timely and valuable.



DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN

AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS POST 53 PRESENT

\$50  
per  
Rider

\$30  
per  
guest

# MICHIGAN LEGACY RIDE 2026

**JUNE 19-20, 2026**

**JUNE 18: MONROE POST 40  
REGISTRATION OPENS AT 4:00PM**

**JUNE 19: KSU @ 9:00AM  
LUNCH IN HILLSDALE**

**ENDING DAY 1 IN SOUTH HAVEN**

**JUNE 20: BREAKFAST + KSU @  
8:00AM + TRAVELLING TO CLARE  
CLOSING CEREMONY AT POST 558**

**REGISTRATION FRIDAY MORNING IN MONROE  
/ SOUTH HAVEN ON 6.19 FOR THOSE  
WISHING TO JOIN THERE**

**RAISING MONEY FOR MICHIGAN**

**VETERANS AND CHILDRENS PROGRAMS**

email: [post53riders@gmail.com](mailto:post53riders@gmail.com) / more details to come

IN PERSON REGISTRATION OPENS JUNE 18TH 4-8PM

ONLINE REGISTRATION OPENING IN FEBRUARY