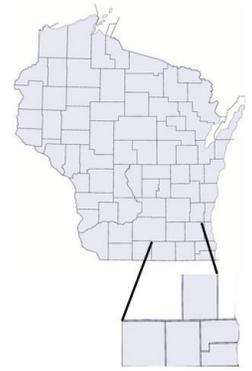




# Wisconsin American Legion First District



*Serving 60,000+ veterans from the shores  
of Lake Michigan to the idyllic Sugar River*

**May 2021**

Greetings American Legion Family!

**BLUF** – (For those of you who missed it, here is my Commander’s Report from the Conference)

As my first year as your District Commander comes to a close, all I can say is “it’s been an interesting year”.

With the cancellation of all things Legion last summer, it forced us to figure out new ways to conduct our business and keep in contact with our members. Social media became invaluable. Live-streaming of meetings, ZOOM and TEAM meetings became the norm. We were able to occasionally come together, as the District did in Mukwonago last October, but for the most part, we spent a lot of time staring at our computer screens and missing the person to person contact with our fellow veterans that is so important to our well-being. With so many of our programs being cancelled, we risk losing our place in our communities. Now that things are opening back up, we must hit the ground running with our programs. We must get our name back out in the conversation, and remind people that we are still here and still relevant. Get your local contests going again. Try to hold something at the County level. Even if the Department or National program is still down, we can set ourselves up for success by restarting things locally, and then building on that momentum going into 2022.

One of the things that’s always perplexed me is why we don’t send up more award submissions to the Department. Our Posts and our communities are doing great things, and those things are being done by great people, and that all deserves some recognition. That is why, starting with this conference, I am appointing a newly created Awards Committee, that will consist of one representative from each County. Their charge is to personally call on each of our Posts and solicit awards and information about what each Post does, and to help them fill out the paperwork and submit for the “of the year” awards and to get that special recognition for our hard-working members and the hard-working members of our communities. Additionally, the committee is being charged with developing the criteria necessary for the creation of a First District Legionnaire of the Year award to recognize that one individual who went above and beyond for the 1<sup>st</sup> District each year.

My Vice Commanders, County Commanders and I communicated a lot through phone calls and e-mails this past year. I was able to attend some County Council meetings, but they were few and far between. I spent much of my home time mining the membership lists, especially the lapsed member list and the 2930 roster to try and give our Posts the resources they need to keep their membership up. We’ve had some success with this, too. I want to publicly recognize Kenosha County Adjutant Mike Hellquist for all of his work in transferring 2930 members in Kenosha County into one of the 5 county Posts. His efforts, along with the Post membership teams, have resulted in 2 of the 5 Posts being at or over 100%, and two others needing just a few more members to make goal.

As you heard earlier, out of our 44 Posts, we have 10 Posts at 100% or more, and 30 Posts above 85%. We are moving in the right direction, but we still have work to do. We are currently 725 members short of the District being 100%, out of that 725, we need to renew 361 prior to 30 days before National Convention to avoid losing a delegate for National Convention. The implication being that if we don’t get those 361 members, one of our Counties will not have a delegate.



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Ladies and Gentlemen, as I have said at every County Council meeting that I've attended, there are more than enough lapsed members and 2930 members to cover that 725. Many more than enough. Several times more than enough. We just need to make that contact. We just need to ask. Will they all respond? No, of course not. But you know what? They all don't need to respond for us to grow. Start small. Ask one. Ask another and another. Some will ignore you; some will flat turn you down, but I guarantee that some will take you up on the offer. I proved it in my own post. My Post is over 100% for the first time in 5 years, and we did it primarily by calling our lapsed members and convincing them to come back. We've picked up some 2930's and a handful of new members, but for the most part all we did was ask. I sat down one Saturday night and composed an email explaining why a veteran should join my Post. I sent out 125 emails that weekend. I got told no. Trust me, I did. I even got chewed out once, but I didn't let that discourage me. I just kept asking. We've gotten ourselves into a very bad habit of waiting for National to send out a notice and then hoping the dues will come in. We've stopped talking to our members, and we are paying for it. We have got to get back to being that friendly face, that friendly voice that brought those veterans into the Legion in the first place. Please, please, contact your members. Sell yourself, sell your Post and sell the Legion. Talk about all of the great things that we do. Remind them why they joined in the first place and urge them to come back in. You can do this. You can be the leader that your Post needs. You are already leaders in our organization, or you wouldn't be here today. Now take that enthusiasm back to your Posts, and inspire the rest of your members to make that contact.

In closing, I want you to remember, what I shared with you last spring, when we started this journey together. The day will come when you don't want to do this anymore, and you are going to need someone to pick up where you leave off. Our organization depends on it. GO RECRUIT THE NEXT YOU!

### **Introducing Sergeant – at – Arms Joan Sallee**

Born and raised in Washington State, Joan "Joni" Sallee enlisted in the United States Air Force and was trained as a meteorologist. During her 9 years active duty, she was stationed at Barksdale AFB, LA, Anderson AFB, Guam, McChord AFB, WA and Sather AFB, Iraq.

Upon discharge from the Air Force, Joni joined the American Legion, Department of Washington and attended her first Department Convention that year. Soon after, she received training as a Veterans Service Officer for the Department and worked for a year and a half filing pension claims, during which time she also attended St. Martin's University in Lacey, WA, studying Mathematics.

Her work with the Department of Washington and her education were interrupted when her husband received orders for a 3-year diplomatic posting in New Zealand. During that time, she worked at the American Embassy as the Community Liaison Officer.

Upon the completion of the assignment, her husband, a Wisconsin native, chose to retire, and the family decided to settle in Walworth, WI. Joni began work in the Walworth County Veterans Service Office as a Veterans Services Specialist.

She transferred from the Department of Washington to the Department of Wisconsin and joined Ingalls – Koeppen Post 102 in Walworth, and was elected Post Commander. She was soon after designated as Walworth County Council Adjutant. The following year, she was appointed as Vice Chair of the Communications Committee for the American Legion, Department of Wisconsin. In 2020, Joni announced her candidacy for 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Commander for the 1<sup>st</sup> District, however, in April of that year, she was elected a trustee on the Village Board of Walworth, and withdrew as a Vice Commander candidate. She instead accepted election to Sergeant – at – Arms for the 1<sup>st</sup> District. She also serves in the Walworth – Big Foot High School Booster Club.

Joni has been happily married to fellow veteran and Legionnaire, Josh Sallee for 22 years. They are extremely proud of their two children, 18-year-old daughter, Celeste, and 16-year-old son, Aidan. They live in Walworth in a converted Masonic Lodge.

## Membership Report

In the interest of saving space, I will only publish the totals for the 5 Counties. Your County Commander will have the numbers for each Post. These are totals as of April 30, 2021.

1. Walworth County (770) (goal) 719 (paid), 93.38%
  2. Rock County (811) 721, 88.90%
  3. Racine County (729) 639, 87.65%
  4. Kenosha County (613) 531, 86.62%
  5. Waukesha County (2996) 2529, 85.99%
- First District (5864) 5139, 87.64% (10<sup>th</sup> place in the Department)

Upcoming National target dates: 95% by 5/12/2021, 100% by 6/9/2021

## 2021 100% POSTS

Ingalls – Koeppen Post 102, Walworth  
Devins – Teehan – McGuire Post 237, Footville  
Moser – Ortmann Post 130, Sharon  
Kelley – Gardner – Katzman – Stoflet Post 45, Elkhorn  
Frank Kresen Post 24, Lake Geneva

Wells – Davis – Young – Neal Post 209, Orfordville  
Ralph Amundson Post 30, Edgerton  
David Leet Post 552, Somers  
Schultz – Hahn Post 293, Silver Lake  
McKinney – Hatlevig Post 35, Evansville

## What's News?

1. **First District Spring Conference** – The First District Spring Conference was held on Sunday, May 2, 2021. The conference was hosted by Ingalls – Koeppen Post 102, Walworth, and took place at the Abbey Springs Country Club in Fontana. The entire Conference was live-streamed and can be viewed on the [District Facebook Page](#). The Conference was well attended; however, I was disappointed that half of the District Posts did not send any delegates. Hopefully, we can rectify that by the Fall Conference. There is much useful information and resources put out at our District Conferences, and Posts should try to send at least one delegate to receive that information and report back to the Post. Department Commander Dave Wischer shared some details of the on-going turnover at Camp American Legion. Almost the entire staff is being replaced due to retirements and current employees moving on to other positions outside the Legion. Department Adjutant Nate Gear introduced himself to the delegates and spoke of his vision for the future of the Department, and how he feels we need to adjust fire when it comes to recruiting today's veterans. We heard from several candidates for higher office, who shared their visions and intentions. District Committee Chairs reported on the status and upcoming events pertaining to their programs. Caledonia Post 494 was awarded the 2022 District Oratorical Contest. Kenosha Post 21 was awarded the 2022 Spring Conference. **Mark your calendars now for the 2021 Fall Conference, which will be hosted by Orfordville Post 209 on October 3, 2021.**
2. **Moving Wall coming to Waukesha** – *The Moving Wall* is scheduled to visit the City of Waukesha at Frame Park, May 27 through 6:00 am June 1, 2021. *The Moving Wall* is a half-sized replica of the Washington DC Vietnam Veterans Memorial. An Opening Ceremony is scheduled for Thursday, May 27 at 6:00 pm. During the ceremony, the names of our Brothers lost from the City of Waukesha will be read aloud. Family members of the Waukesha Servicemen will be recognized if they so choose. For more information click [HERE](#).
3. **National announces 100 Miles for Hope** - The second annual American Legion 100 Miles for Hope kicks off April 1 and runs through Sept. 6. The challenge encourages American Legion Family members and friends to regularly engage in wellness and fitness activities of at least 30 minutes in length. All proceeds from registrations, donations and purchases of gear at Emblem Sales go toward [The American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation](#). For more information click [HERE](#).

4. **National announces the release of a new video** - The American Legion has created a video about our youth programs. This would be a great resource for Posts when meeting with the schools to promote the many programs. [Read More](#).
5. **Tips for Veterans before, during and after COVID-19 vaccination** - As of April 8, 2021, 2.3 million Veterans have gotten at least 1 dose of a COVID-19 vaccine through VA. We thank each of these Veterans for taking this important step to protect themselves, their families, and their communities. The VA has created an information clearinghouse to assist Veterans searching for follow-up care, updates on the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, how to sign up, safety concerns and much more. View the entire clearinghouse [here](#) or call toll-free: **800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411)**.
6. **Cost-free mental health care now available for Veterans** – The US Department of Veterans Affairs announces that any Veteran, regardless of discharge status, can receive cost-free mental health care at any Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic in the country. In a recent podcast episode of *Borne the Battle*, Army Veteran Dr. Anneke Vandebroek, a board-certified clinical psychologist discusses changes in treating Veterans in times of COVID, cognitive behavioral therapy, and the importance of mental healthcare. The podcast can be viewed [here](#).
7. **Department Chairman Jim Foster Announces Winners in the A&G Test Program** – District and Department Chair Jim Foster recently announced the winners of the 2021 American and Government Test program scholarships. First District winners were: Senior: Logan Muffick – Waterford Union High School, Junior: Logan Piktel - Westosha Central High School and Sophomore: Anant Jhaveri – Brookfield East High School. Congratulations to all the winners!
8. **Concurrent Receipt Legislation Again Introduced in Congress** - Legislation to expand concurrent receipt has recently been introduced by Senator Jon Tester (MT) that extends concurrent receipt to Concurrent Retirement and Disability Payments (CRDP) retirees (20 or more years of service) rated less than 50 percent disabled. The *Retired Pay Restoration Act* (S. 1147) is similar to legislation (H.R. 303) introduced by Rep. Gus Bilirakis (FL) with the same title. Earlier, Rep. Sanford Bishop (GA) introduced the *Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act* (H.R. 333) which is comprehensive concurrent receipt legislation that would also give concurrent receipt to CRDP retirees whose disability ratings are below 50 percent and Chapter 61 retirees with less than 20 years of service. In February Rep. Bilirakis and Sen. Tester introduced the *Major Richard Star Act* (H.R. 1282 /S. 344, respectively) that expands concurrent receipt to include Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) beneficiaries who are medically retired with less than 20 years of service. Legionnaires are strongly urged to contact their legislators to ask them to support these bills.
9. **Department Standing Committees** – Each year the Department Commander is tasked with filling the many seats on the Department Standing Committees. If you are a Legionnaire that is interested in learning more about the different Committees and Commissions, go to [wilegion.org](#), click on the 'Get Connected' Tab, then 'Committees & Commissions' and then click on any of the Committees/Commissions you may be interested in. On each committee/commission page, you will find a toolkit with the Standing Committee Application. If you are interested, please complete the application and submit it to your District Commander. Think about your military and civilian careers and where you could be an asset to Legion Wisconsin. If you have any questions, please contact your District Commander or Department Headquarters at (608) 745-1090.
10. **Troop and Family Support Fund** – The pandemic has brought loss of jobs, isolation, depression and more to our Veterans and their families. The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin's resource to help those in need is the Troop & Family Support Fund. This fund is in need of support so we can continue to help veterans with rent, utilities, the holidays and more. If you have the resources, please consider donating to the Troop & Family Support Fund. It has been used to keep families from homelessness, repair their transportation so they can get to work to continue to support their families, keep their utilities on and much more. To donate go to [wilegion.org](#) and choose Troop & Family Support.

- 11. Legion posts affected by COVID can apply for \$1,000 grant** – Public health mandates in response to the coronavirus included stay-at-home orders and business closures. Those mandates financially impacted American Legion Posts nationwide as member and community outreach efforts were limited, resulting in a loss of revenue. To provide some relief during these challenging times, financial grants are now available for eligible American Legion Posts.

Resolution No. 36, Mission Blue Post Assistance Program, will provide \$1,000 grants to Posts that are in good standing with their respective department. These funds must be used exclusively to pay current or past due rent, mortgage, utilities and insurance. The American Legion National Executive Committee approved Resolution No. 36 Oct. 14, during its annual Fall Meetings. Funds for the approved grants will be provided through The American Legion National Emergency Fund (NEF). For more information contact Department Headquarters. American Legion Posts have until Dec. 31, 2021, to apply for an Operation Blue PAP grant.

- 12. News from the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King** – Are you a hospitalized veteran? A spouse of a veteran? A widow of a veteran? Or a Gold Star parent? Call the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King as we have beds available and would be happy to assist you! Please call 715-258-5586 and ask for the Admissions Department.

**13. Notes from Wisconsin American Legion Headquarters**

**Post Mailings** – You all previously received correspondence that Post Mailings would be going virtual and bi-monthly. Post mailings can be viewed at <https://wilegion.org/post-mailing/>.

**Consolidated Post Reports** – The 2020-2021 Consolidate Post Report (CPR), Children and Youth Report (C&Y) and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Report (VA&R) are now available on [wilegion.org](http://wilegion.org). County Commanders will be tracking this progress and will be contacting Posts to urge submission. **Deadline for submission to Department is June 1.** The 1<sup>st</sup> District needs to achieve a 100% submission rate for these vital reports. If you have any questions or need assistance, contact Commander Stuvengen.

**New myLegion.org roll-out** – The new myLegion.org (aka Personify) continues to experience problems. National insists that these problems are being resolved, albeit, very slowly in many cases. We understand and appreciate your frustration with this new program. It is important for you to understand that the Department is in the same boat with you. We ask for your patience as we wait while National works the bugs out of their program. More information from National is available [here](#).

**Veteran Golfers Association** - The VGA is dedicated to enriching the lives of Veterans and their family members through the camaraderie and sportsmanship of golf. Annually, the VGA hosts more than 450 local tournaments across the country, culminating in a VGA National Championship each fall. For more information and to see a list of Wisconsin tournaments, click [HERE](#).

**It's Awards Season** - Each year Posts, Counties and Districts have the opportunity to recognize individuals, within the organization and outside the organization, who are working on behalf of Wisconsin's Veterans. This is also an opportunity to show the Department what your Post is doing in the way of Legion programs. All award forms and criteria can be found at [wilegion.org](http://wilegion.org).

**National American Legion College** – The 2021 National Legion College class will convene Dec. 12-17, 2021. The 2021 student application is now available at [legion.org/college](http://legion.org/college). Class of 2021 student applications are due July 31, 2021.

**Past Department Commander Jim Reigel** - It is with great sadness that we share the passing of Past Department Commander James "Jim" Reigel. Jim was elected Department Commander at the 2008 Department Convention. He served many roles at all levels of the

organization, most currently as Wisconsin American Legion Foundation President, member of the Policy Committee and a member of the Badger Boys State Board of Directors.

**Utility Assistance** - With the Utility Disconnection Moratorium ending, here are some resources for those in need:

- Alert your CVSOs and work with partner agencies to help support those who are affected.
- WHEAP <http://homeenergyplus.wi.gov/>
- Heat for Heroes <https://heat4heroes.org/Apply-For-Assistance>
- <https://wiscap.org/wera/>

#### 14. What's happening around the First District

Frank Kresen Unit and Post 24 in Lake Geneva recently dedicated a Poppy Sculpture memorial as part of the Veterans Memorial in Library Park in Lake Geneva. This powder-coated sculpture features 13 bold red poppies and is 7 feet tall. Local artist John Larkin of Williams Bay donated his time and expertise on the project. Anyone passing through Lake Geneva is urged to stop and see this marvelous memorial.



(Photo courtesy of Commander Stuvengen)

District Commander Karl Stuvengen welcomed Department Commander David Wischer and several candidates for Department office to the recently concluded Spring Conference. Pictured (L to R) are Past 1stDC Bill Babb, (candidate for Department Vice Commander), 10thDC Harry Bauer (candidate for Department Vice Commander), Department VC Greg Eirich (candidate for Department Commander), Department Commander Wischer, Past 1stDC David Latimer (candidate for Department Vice Commander), and District Commander Stuvengen.



*(Photo courtesy of Greg Eirich)*

15. **New Memorial Day Weekend Tradition** - The War Memorial Center in Milwaukee will create a field of 7,056 flags transforming the ground north of their building in Veterans Park into a majestic Field of Flags in tribute to all fallen U.S. Armed Forces service members who have been killed in action since the War on Terror began after September 11, 2001. [More Information](#)
16. **102<sup>nd</sup> Annual Department Convention** – The Department announces the upcoming 102nd Department Convention July 14-18, 2021 at the newly remodeled Madison Marriott West in beautiful Middleton, WI. There is an exciting line up of speakers, awards and entertainment scheduled. Saturday evening will feature live music by [West on 12](#) featuring Active National Guard member Rocco. There is lots of room for re-connecting safely and moving The American Legion, Department of Wisconsin into the next 100 years.

17. **Training Time-out** – How well do you know the Preamble? We say it before every meeting of the Legion, but do we really know what it means? In this space each month, we will explore a clause of our Preamble. Take a few minutes at the beginning of your Post meeting and read the paragraph to the membership to better understand our Preamble.

**To promote peace and good will on earth ...** Until the entire world becomes a good neighborhood, Legionnaires must continue the effort to promote peace and good will on earth. It is in pursuance of this founding ideal that The American Legion has supported from the beginning and seeks to strengthen the United Nations organization. Obliquely, The American Legion also contributes to this ideal by firmly supporting a strong national defense to discourage breaking of the peace by aggressors.

***Memorial Day, Monday, May 31, 2021***



Until next time, ***recruit, retain and engage***. I wish everyone a safe and enjoyable Memorial Day.

***Go recruit the next YOU!***