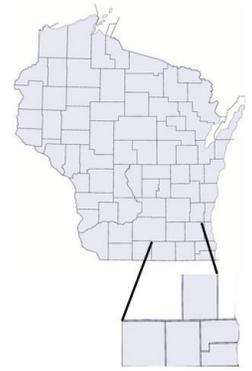




# Wisconsin American Legion First District



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

**February 2022**

Greetings, American Legion Family!

**BLUF** – February, and Groundhog Day. The half-way point of winter is here. As I sit putting this month’s newsletter together, the temperatures are below zero, and the wind-chills are an even more ridiculous number. Oh, well. Winter in Wisconsin!

As long as we are stuck inside, or at least don’t want to go out, this is a great opportunity to contact our members. We all know that face to face contact is the best, but let’s be real, no one wants to stand out on anyone’s porch talking when it’s this cold. So, what are some good ways to keep in touch with our members?

Many Posts still use a monthly or quarterly newsletter. I’ve seen quite a few in the last couple of years. Post 310 Commander John Capriotti has revived their letter, and recently gave me a copy. It’s not a big elaborate production, only 4 pages actually. But it is packed with information about what the Post is doing, what they have done recently, and some plans for the future. There are a few pictures, and some clipart graphics. It is interesting, and gets to the point. This month they are sending it to all of their members, plus all of the 2930 members in the City of Racine.

Other Posts have built e-mail lists of their members and send newsletters electronically. This saves time and money. With postage these days, the less you have to mail the better. It is also much easier to reproduce a few copies for your members that don’t have e-mail, than to print 100 or 200 copies, fold paper, stuff envelopes and comply with all the post office rules for mass mailing. You would be surprised how many of your members would prefer this method. I send out 112 District newsletters every month, all electronically. When I was building my list, I asked if anyone wanted a hard copy in the mail. No one took me up on it.

Many Posts are now on Facebook and other social media and also maintain websites. Kenosha Post 21 Adjutant Paul Ciarelli has developed a wonderful website with a tremendous amount of information and links of interest to their members and to veterans in general. I try to follow as many of the Post Facebook pages as I can, and like and share the information and events that are posted. There is one caveat to using these tools. You must keep it updated. You should have a tech-savvy member or two, who can stay on top of this. Nothing is more frustrating for a potential member than to pull up the Facebook page of the local Post, only to have the last entry be from 2018. It certainly doesn’t peak anyone’s interest in joining.

Several Posts now live-stream their meetings on YouTube or other channels. Although this started during the 2020 lockdowns, many Posts discovered that this gave members who can’t attend meetings or live out of state the opportunity to stay abreast of Post and community activities. That second shift worker can now watch the meeting proceedings at their leisure and not miss out on Post happenings. Mukwonago Post 375 noticed an uptick in interest and response from their out of state members by doing this. This works especially well for snow-birds and those who are only in the area periodically. When they know an event is scheduled for when they are home, they can make it a point to come out and participate.



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Still others have set up phone banks, and a few folks get together and call their members. This is how the Buddy Check program is supposed to work. This is also something that needs to be on-going. If the only time your members hear from you is when you want money, they will soon learn to ignore your calls. This is especially important for your older members. WWII and Korea vets are getting to the age where they can use a hand with various things. Calling them, just to check up on them, let's them know that you care about their well-being and they are more than just dues. This is also a good way to involve your younger members. Most will gladly help out an older veteran, and it will give them a sense of ownership in Post activities.

The important thing in all of this, and where we seem to be lacking, is COMMUNICATE! You don't need to do all of these things, but no matter what, we simply must do a better job contacting our members. Think about it. A new member joins your post and for whatever reason can't make the monthly meetings. It would be nice to hear about what is going on at the Post, because maybe they can help out with some function that doesn't interfere with the reason they can't come to meetings. Problem is, they never hear from the Post, except when it's dues time. That can get old pretty fast. In a perfect world, if a member wants to be active, they should take the initiative and find out what's going on. But we all know this isn't a perfect world and sometimes you have to force the issue. Staying in contact with our members gives them one less excuse for not being involved. Even if they can only help out with one thing a year, that's one less volunteer you have to recruit for that event, and it gives that member a sense of belonging and making a contribution to a worthy cause.

Speaking of forcing the issue, direct contact is the best way to recruit volunteers. Most times when someone is asked specifically if they can help out at a Post function, they won't turn you down. All too often, the Post Commander throws out a plea for help to no one in particular, and I've never seen a Commander stampeded with volunteers because of it. Quite the opposite, actually, you generally hear crickets.

Hopefully, I've given you some ideas on ways to improve communication with our members. I am including the District Facebook and website list with this month's newsletter. Take a look at what other Posts are doing, and see if there's something that they are doing that your Post can do. Remember, nothing succeeds like success, and you don't need to re-invent the wheel. Contact your members and **GO RECRUIT THE NEXT YOU!**

## **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 the totals as of January 27, 2022.

1. Walworth County (753) (goal) 636 (paid), 84.46%
  2. Kenosha County (545) 457, 83.85%
  3. Rock County (758) 628, 82.85%
  4. Racine County (691) 548, 79.31%
  5. Waukesha County (2765) 2174, 78.63%
- First District (5512) 4443, 80.61% (8<sup>th</sup> place in the Department)

2022 National Targets: 85% – 2/9/2022; 90% – 3/9/2022; 4/13/2022 – 95%

## **2022 100% POSTS**

Ingalls – Koeppen Post 102, Walworth  
Ralph Amundson Post 30, Edgerton  
Kelly – Gardner – Katzman – Stoflet Post 45, Elkhorn  
Moser – Ortmann Post 130, Sharon

## What's News?

- 1. High School Oratorical Contest** – The District Oratorical contest was held on Saturday, January 29, 2022 at Post 494 in Caledonia. We had two contestants, Marshall Griffin from Walworth County, and Josh Gulezynski from Waukesha County. It was a very competitive contest, and both speakers were awarded the Marcia L. Goodrich Memorial Scholarship. Marshall will represent the 1<sup>st</sup> District at the Department contest, which will be held on Saturday, February 12, 2022 at Ripon College. Many thanks to District Chair Lisa Fauster and Post 494 for all of their hard work in setting up and conducting a wonderful contest. Hopefully, we will have more candidates taking part in this showcase American Legion program in 2023!
- 2. Wreaths Across America** – One final note on the Wreaths Across America mission. District Coordinator Mary-Ellen Crandall has asked that when you make your contributions next year, that you do so through local channels. There was an issue this year with on-line contributions being sent to the wrong cemeteries. In order to guarantee that your donations will be used at the Union Grove cemetery, please ensure that your contributions are sent directly to Mary-Ellen.
- 3. Calling All First District Legionnaires** – This is your biennial notice that in four short months it will be time for the Spring Conference, and with it, election of officers. The District will elect one District Commander, three Vice Commanders, one Finance Officer and two Sergeants-at-Arms. Nominations and elections for all District offices will take place during the afternoon session. Art. IV, Sec. 3 of the District By-laws reads in part: *The District Commander shall call for nominations, beginning with the office of District Commander. Nominating speeches for all officers shall be limited to two minutes and the seconding for all officers shall come from the floor.* Any Legionnaire who holds a current (2022) membership in a First District Post is eligible to be elected to a District Office. There is no automatic succession, meaning persons are required to be nominated and elected for all offices. Contact District Commander Stuvengen or District Judge Advocate Ted DeMicchi for more information about the process or the duties and responsibilities of the various elective offices.
- 4. Badger Boys State** – District Chair Michelle Adams reports: This year for Badger Boys State, we are considering bus transportation. Please reach out to your respective Posts to find out how many boys would be interested. They must commit to traveling to and from the event via bus travel. Our preliminary quote, given 50 filled seats, would cost \$54 per person, round trip. Please report your findings to me as soon as possible. There are currently two quotes from bus companies in the District to provide this service. The most important factor in arranging this transportation is the number of riders that commit to taking the bus. Please discuss this option with your students and pass that information on to me. The District, Counties and Posts are willing to cover the cost, so that students can participate without undue financial obligations. However, without a full bus, we will not be able to justify the expense. For more information contact Chair Adams at [liberty1776george@gmail.com](mailto:liberty1776george@gmail.com) or 414-975-6914.
- 5. From 1<sup>st</sup> District American Legion Riders President Randy Timms** – Currently, the Wisconsin Legion Riders have a membership of roughly 750 men and women. Legionnaires, Active Duty, SAL and Auxiliary are all represented. The District 1 Riders report a current membership of 90 and growth has been steady over the past year.

District 1, from 2014 thru 2020, recorded donations just over \$72,000.00 to veteran organizations and veterans in need. Averaging \$1,000 per month for 72 months! During these Covid-trying times, that average has fallen to about \$700.00 per month. Still an impressive number given the difficulties we've all encountered.

The Legion Riders want every District 1 Post to be aware of who they are and what they can contribute to your Post. In that vein, they have been attending County Council meetings to introduce themselves. They are establishing a "Road Captain" in each of our 5 Counties so your

Post will have a name and contact information when a need arises. Some of the services which they are happy to provide include:

- Funeral escort – no matter the location, they will lead the procession to its destination.
- They work closely with law enforcement whenever necessary to assist in traffic control
- Casket Guard – Depending on the needs of the Post, or wishes of the family, they will provide casket guard duty during visitations
- They will gladly lead your parades and/or special events. As a “Motorized Color Guard” the Riders have been welcomed in many municipalities and help in building relationships at all levels.
- They can provide a “static-line” of flagged motorcycles during your event.
- Riders are happy to meet with members of your Post to introduce the Rider Program and answer all questions

If you have questions or wish to reach out to them, email [alradistrict1president@twc.com](mailto:alradistrict1president@twc.com).

**6. News from the US Department of Veterans Affairs** – The following articles were recently published by the US DVA:

- **Survivor Benefits for Family Members** – If you’re the surviving spouse, child, or parent of a service member or Veteran who died from a service-related injury or illness, you may be eligible for VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). DIC is a tax-free monthly financial benefit. To find out if you’re eligible and how to apply, click [here](#).
- **VA Benefits for Presumptive Exposure** – If you are a Veteran or survivor who may be eligible for the newly established military exposure presumptive conditions, VA encourages you to apply for benefits. Even if the illness or injury is not a presumptive, we still want every Veteran to file a claim for benefits they've earned and deserve. Learn more [here](#).
- **Mortgage Life Insurance Protects Your Family** – Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) provides mortgage protection for families of Veterans with severe service-connected disabilities. VMLI pays up to \$200,000 in mortgage life insurance directly to the bank or other lender that holds your mortgage. Learn if you’re eligible and how to [apply](#).
- **Appeal Your VA Claim** – Do you disagree with VA's decision on your claim? Veterans and other claimants for VA benefits can choose from three decision review options: Supplemental Claim, Higher-Level Review, and Board Appeal. Learn more about your appeal options [here](#).
- **Train for a Career in Tech** – Are you seeking a career in the tech industry? VA’s Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) program can help you reach your goal. VET TEC not only pays tuition and fees, it also offers a housing allowance to use while you earn your certification. Learn more about the VET TEC program [here](#).
- **Free Help for Homeless Veterans** - VA’s specialized programs for homeless Veterans provide housing solutions, employment opportunities, health care, justice- and reentry-related services, and more. If you, or someone you know, is homeless or at risk of homelessness, call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.

**7. Military Paperwork** – Do you know where all of the important documents are that relate to your military service? More importantly, do your family members know where these papers are? Veterans Service Officers often face the daunting task of locating a deceased veteran’s DD-214 and other important documents to be able to provide burial benefits and other survivor’s benefits for veterans and their families. In some cases, family members did not even know that a decedent had service in the military. At the very least, a veteran’s DD-214 should be filed with the County

Register of Deeds for safe keeping. Other important papers should be safely kept together in an envelop or binder and plainly marked as to their contents. Veterans are urged to discuss these matters with family members ahead of time, so that earned benefits can be provided when the time comes. Contact your County Veterans Service office **today**, to find out what documents you should keep and have available to your survivors.

- 8. From U. S. Senator Tammy Baldwin** – Be aware that every home in the U.S. is now eligible to order 4 free, at-home rapid COVID-19 tests. Orders will usually ship in 7-12 days.

Tests are available for every residential address in the U.S., including U.S. Territories and overseas military and diplomatic addresses. To place an order, all you need is your name and residential address. No ID, credit card, or health insurance information is required.

Order tests online at [COVIDtests.gov](https://COVIDtests.gov) or order tests via phone by calling 1-800-232-0233 (TTY 1-888-720-7489). Get help in English, Spanish, and more than 150 other languages – 8am to midnight ET, 7 days a week. The Disability Information and Access Line (DIAL) is also available to specifically help people with disabilities place their orders. To get help, call 1-888-677-1199, Monday-Friday from 9AM to 8PM ET, or email [DIAL@usaginganddisability.org](mailto:DIAL@usaginganddisability.org).

The free tests available for order:

- Are FDA-authorized rapid antigen at-home tests, not PCR
- Can be taken anywhere
- Give results within 30 minutes (no lab drop-off required)
- Work whether or not you have COVID-19 symptoms
- Work whether or not you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines
- Are also referred to as self-tests or over-the-counter (OTC) tests

If you need a COVID-19 test today, [COVIDtests.gov](https://COVIDtests.gov) also provides other resources for free testing locations in your area.

Additionally, individuals with private health insurance coverage can now get reimbursed by their health plan for **eight COVID-19 rapid tests each month**. Learn more [here](#) and contact your health insurer directly for specific information on reimbursement. Individuals enrolled in BadgerCare are also able to receive COVID-19 OTC tests without paying out of pocket.

- 9. SAL Convention Committee Seeking Convention Memorabilia** – The SAL 50th Convention Committee is seeking memorabilia from past conventions in advance of this year’s milestone event. All SAL members are welcome to donate or lend items to SAL National Historian Bill Towns. He can be reached at [docbill@neo.rr.com](mailto:docbill@neo.rr.com).

The committee is looking for:

- Pictures of PNCs both in office and after office.
- Convention activities.
- Convention badges, VIP badges, pins and coins.
- Convention newsletters, programs and documents.
- Any other memorabilia related to any of the past SAL national conventions.

The committee also has a special request for photos from The American Legion’s 60th national convention of members posing to form the number 60.

In addition, all SAL PNCs are asked to complete a questionnaire about their term. The fillable questionnaire is available for download at this link. Please return the completed questionnaire to Towns at [docbill@neo.rr.com](mailto:docbill@neo.rr.com).

## **10. Notes From The American Legion National Headquarters**

- **MyLegion.org Reports** – Reports in MyLegion.org play a vital role with tracking membership. The Reports and Labels tab in the left-hand navigation menu is the primary

location to create reports for membership rosters and revitalization efforts, as well as communication to post and squadron members. Learn more [here](#).

- **From National Adjutant Dan Wheeler** – The tornadoes and severe storms that moved across several central states in early December resulted in loss of life and devastating destruction in communities. A few of the states most impacted include Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri and Tennessee. In the immediate aftermath, American Legion posts across the country responded with aid that poured into Mayfield, KY. The support has been great. Read the full text of Adjutant Wheeler’s remarks [here](#).
- **Tango Alpha Lima** – A special podcast series has been produced that focuses on veteran suicide, listen to the podcast [here](#).
- **From NALCAA President Terri L. Clinton (CO)** – As you develop training and education programs at the district and post level, it’s important to align your goals with the overall mission of The American Legion. Four documents produced by National Headquarters will provide you with most of the information you need to understand how our great organization functions and operates. All are available to download for free at [legion.org/publications](http://legion.org/publications). Read, familiarize yourself, and own the information found in these important documents. Then you will successfully understand, and be able to convey to your training audience, how The American Legion works.

These documents include:

- The American Legion Charter and our National Constitution and By-Laws
  - The Uniform Code of Procedures for The Organization of National Conventions
  - Rules of the National Executive Committee
  - The Outline of Authorization; Membership and Purpose for Commissions and Committees
- **Training Tuesdays** - The last Tuesday of each month, the Internal Affairs and Membership Division has committed to conducting training. These 60-minute sessions are aimed at Post Commanders and Adjutants. Each Training Tuesday session is recorded for later viewing. Video presentations and PowerPoints are available [here](#). **Send us your submissions!** If you have comments, questions, or suggestions for training topics, we want to hear from you. As we all know, the best ideas come from the people who are working the programs. So please share your ideas about topics you’d like us to cover in our Training Tuesday sessions and Training In A Box modules. If you’d like to contribute to the Training Newsletter, we welcome your articles, pictures and anecdotes. You can send your ideas and articles via email to [LegionTraining@legion.org](mailto:LegionTraining@legion.org).

**11. From Department Membership Committee Chair Jim Waltich** - The *March Madness Event* will take place during the month of March in twelve team, four round brackets where Districts are matched against each other. No data and status will be released until the end of the month to encourage every Post, County, District, and Vice Commanders to work their hardest. The brackets allow for EVERY District to have the ability to win the whole thing. The event will consist of four parts:

- Number of Buddy Checks events conducted
- Membership renewals and new members signed up
- 2930 Transfers
- Number of membership events held throughout the District

Points will be assigned for the listed criteria. Prizes will include \$100 to the winning District, \$200 to the winning County and \$300 to the winning Post. Contact your District Commander for more details.

## 12. Notes from Wisconsin American Legion Headquarters

- **Post Mailings** – Get HQ updates here: <https://wilegion.org/headquarters-updates-news/>.
- **Thank You to All Who Made The 2022 Midwinter A Success** - The 2022 Midwinter has come to a close. The team thanks you all for the success of this year's event and hopes you all had an enjoyable time. Donald Schoechert of Montello was the Grand Prize winner of \$10,000 for the Winter Wonderland Sweepstakes. Donald is a member of Post 351 in Montello. He earned his eligibility in The American Legion by serving in the US Army – 32nd Red Arrow Division Infantry from 1950-1952, as well as the US Air Force where he was a mechanic and gunner and in ordinance from 1952 -1971. Upon retirement from the Air Force he worked for Dane County in the Parks Division where he mowed and plowed until his retirement.
- **From the Department Membership Coordinator** – Chet Faith recently released the following information:
  - **2023:** You may see members renewed for 2023 already. Those should be your PUFL members. I will let you know when you can start sending in 2023 renewals (late June/July 1st).
  - **Exclude members from renewal notices:** If you have Honorary Members or members who do not need to receive renewal notices, please fill out form 133.127 available [here](#). This form needs to be submitted no later than March 1st 2022!
  - **100% Legion Family Ribbons:** The 2021 membership year 100% Legion Family Ribbons will be sent out the week of January 10<sup>th</sup>. If your Post/Squadron/Unit all reached 100% then you should be receiving your ribbons.
  - **April 1<sup>st</sup>:** Just a reminder that next year's rosters and membership cards will be based off the data pulled on April 1, 2022. Information updated by that date should reflect on the new roster and cards. Conversely, anything entered after that date will not appear on next year's roster.
  - **Charters:** We have been receiving numerous requests lately for copies of Post Charters. The only Charters we have are those that have been sent to us in the past, which isn't many. National doesn't have them either. We do have most of the applications for Charters which seems to meet the needs of the Posts' requests. Information will be provided soon on how Posts can order new wall Charters for their Post.
- **Wisconsin American Legion College** - Clear your calendars and take advantage of some FREE training opportunities. The Virtual Training February includes a variety of courses, including a BRAND-NEW County Commander Course. Those taking the Basic Course will have the opportunity to take the Intermediate Course in March and the Advanced Course in April- Dates TBD. Please refer any questions to WALC Dean of Education Bob Shappell at [wilegioncollege@gmail.com](mailto:wilegioncollege@gmail.com) or 414-899-4067. For a class schedule see the WALC web page [here](#). Register for classes [here](#).
- **Administrative Manual 2021-2022** - The Administrative Manual is completely on-line this year. All forms can be found on the website, can be saved to your computer and are fillable. The manual can be found and downloaded on the Headquarters website. Go to the "MEMBERS" dropdown option and select "RESOURCES & MANUALS". This manual will help you see what your Post/County/District should be working on each month.

If you wish to receive a printed copy at the cost of \$20.00 each, contact Department Headquarters at 608-745-1090.

- **Sign up for Department Headquarters Weekly Updates** – Go to the Department website and select “GET CONNECTED” from the dropdown menu, select “Contact Sign-Up” and fill out the form. Lots of great information is passed on each week to include important information for Post and veterans, event information, Legislative & VA Updates, and more. The updates are sent out weekly via email each Friday. ALL Legion Family members are encouraged to sign up for these updates, you do not have to hold a leadership position to receive them.
- **Department Facebook Page** - PLEASE, we need to get our word out. Go to Facebook, search Wisconsin American Legion and like our page. When we post information, please SHARE it. WHY is this important? If you share it, 10 of your friends share it, and 10 of their friends share it and so on, soon 100s of people have seen it. For example, we had a Celebration of Freedom Post that had 52 shares and it reached 8800 people. Most of our posts average 4-5 shares and only reach about 500 people.

**13. Training Time-out** – The principles that we commonly refer to as the Four Pillars can trace their roots directly to our preamble. Over the course of the last year, we examined each clause of the Preamble. Now we will put those clauses to work. The second pillar is: **National Security**. This comes from the clauses: *To maintain law and order*, *To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses*, and *To make right the master of might*. To those who have sworn with their lives to protect America against enemies near and far, national security is a deeply held value.

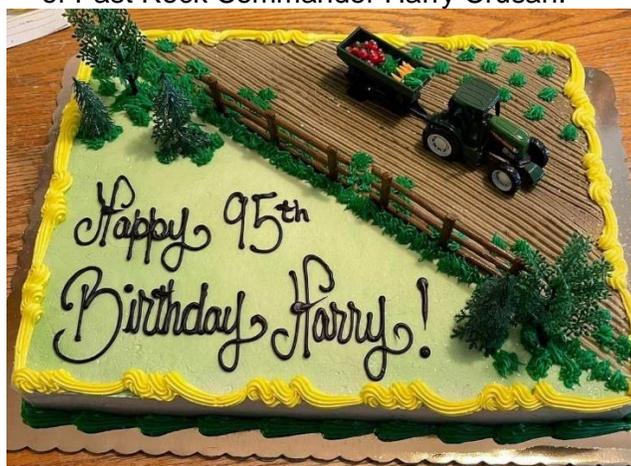
The American Legion’s national security position is multi-faceted. Key aspects include:

- Ensuring a well-funded, well-equipped and well-trained military.
- Focusing awareness and surveillance on rogue nations, terrorist groups and global threats to U.S. security around the world.
- Supporting the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and urging its steadfast protection of U.S. borders, ports and other entry points.
- Enabling a decent quality of life for troops and their families – active duty and reserve-component alike – that includes reasonable compensation, benefits, health care, child care, and family support programs.
- Providing an efficient and compassionate healing and transition program for wounded, ill or injured warriors.

Also within the Legion’s national security pillar is the Foreign Relations Commission that works closely with the Department of State to seek peaceful solutions to conflicts around the world, and to advance the goals of U.S. foreign policy.

**14. What’s happening around the First District**

Clinton Post 440 provided a cake to help celebrate the 95<sup>th</sup> birthday of Past Rock Commander Harry Crusan.



(Photo courtesy of Carol Pastorius)

Orfordville Post 209 Vice Commanders Bill Fitters and Kurt Stuvengen meet with State Senator Janis Ringhand (D – Evansville) prior to giving testimony on a bill to name the portion of STH 11 between Orfordville and Footville after Post 209 namesake Cpl. Benjamin Neal, KIA in Kandahar, Afghanistan, April 25, 2012.



*(Photo courtesy of Bill Fitters)*

Waukesha County Oratorical Chairs Ed Ericksen and Lisa Fauster conduct the County contest on January 15, 2022 at the Mukwonago Community Library.



*(Photo courtesy of Lisa Fauster)*

1<sup>st</sup> District Oratorical contestants Marshall Griffin and Josh Gulezynski with District Commander Karl Stuvengen and District Chair Lisa Fauster at the conclusion of the District contest on January 29, 2022.



(Photo courtesy of Crystal Shaw)



Until next time, ***recruit, retain and engage.***  
**Think Spring!**

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