
The Legionette

THE AMERICAN LEGION
AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT OF
MISSOURI

April 2024



President's message Sheridan Mires

I am looking forward to the spring weather which brings green grass and beautiful flowers. I hope everyone is doing well and ready to submit their reports, so we can share what we do and why we matter.

I have been visiting District meetings and would like to thank all the members for their hospitality. I have more District visits scheduled in the near future.

I attended ALA Mission Training with 1st Vice Shanna and Historian Lindy in Lincoln, NE. The training was led by National leaders, and they provided us with a wealth of information throughout the day.

In March I had the honor of spending time with National President Lisa Williamson during her official visit to Missouri. I think we demonstrated to her the various ways American Legion Auxiliary Members serve our veterans and active military and their families.

In this newsletter
you can expect:

Officer
Endorsements

A Family
Mystery Solved -
21 Years Later! -
SGT Gerald W.
Zdarsky - WWII
Army Air Force

Unit 133 hosts
baby shower for
local veterans

Washington
Conference
2024

Flyers

President's message cont...

Sheridan Mires

I want to share a little about the mission of the Auxiliary. Growing up in the Auxiliary I was fortunate to attend many activities with my grandmother. This time of year became one of my favorite times because of the Auxiliary activities surrounding Poppy Day and Memorial Day. Some of my fondest memories are of these activities, which support the American Legion Auxiliary's mission.

I feel fortunate to have participated in Poppy Days as a Junior Member, and I continue to take part in the activity as an adult. During this event, I've had the opportunity to engage in wonderful conversations with parents who have requested my help in explaining the Poppy Story to their children. It's heartening to see that even though these parents may not have been veterans themselves, they still remember hearing the Poppy Story as children, and look forward to finding the "ladies with the little red flowers."

As a child, I also enjoyed participating in Memorial Day Services and decorating the graves of my family members. My grandmother would point out our ancestors who were veterans and I would help post and retrieve the little flags placed on their graves. It has always been an honor and privilege to do so, and it is a very humbling experience.

Veterans hold a special place in my heart. I feel grateful to them for protecting my freedom. That's why I'm a member of this organization and dedicate my time volunteering for our veterans. I can never repay them for their service, but I do my best to show my appreciation by doing simple things like placing flags on their graves, helping with gift shops, attending memorial services, or distributing poppies. I hope more people can find ways to support our veterans. I want to encourage everyone to participate in the ALA activities during this time to show your appreciation for the sacrifices made by our veterans. Make sure you involve your Junior Members and teach them how to share the Poppy Story.

It's important to remember that our words and actions can have a profound impact on others, especially children.

Endorsement for Department President Shanna Jelinek

At a regular quarterly meeting of District 15, American Legion Auxiliary Department of Missouri held December 10, 2023 in Webb City, MO, Shanna Jelinek was unanimously endorsed for the office of Department President for the year 2024-2025.

Shanna gained her eligibility through her late father, Robert Jelinek, a United States Navy veteran of the Vietnam conflict. Shanna is also eligible through her grandfather Charles Jelinek, a United States Army veteran of World War II. She is a 47 year member, raised in the American Legion Family as a junior since birth at the Hubert H. Kleiboeker Unit # 419 in Freistatt, Missouri. She is member currently of the Ozark Unit #65 in Pierce City, Missouri.

Shanna is an active member of the American Legion Auxiliary on the Unit level. She has served as Sgt-at-Arms, Chaplain, Secretary, and is currently serving as Treasurer. She has also served on several committees including Poppy Poster and is currently the Girls State chairman.

On the District Level, Shanna has served as Chaplain, Treasurer, 1st Vice-President, and President and is currently serving as Sgt-at-Arms. She has also served on several committees including Membership, Poppy Poster, Past Presidents Parley, and has been a Color Bearer attending many ALA Department conventions and Conferences. She is currently serving as the Education and Girls State Chairman.

On the Department level, Shanna is currently serving as Department 1st Vice President, Membership Co-Chair, and a member of the Girls State Committee for 12 years. She has served as chairman of Americanism Essay, Education, Poppy Poster, Poppy, Rules and Resolutions, VA & R, and Community Service, and has been a Department Color Bearer, Chaplain, Historian, and 2nd Vice President. She has also served on the ALA Girls State Staff for 14 years.

Shanna has been a 4th grade teacher for 19 years.

In view of her dedication and service to the American Legion Family, it is with great pride that the members of District 15 endorse Shanna Jelinek as a candidate for the office of President for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Missouri for 2024-2025.

Linda Jelinek, District 15 President
Cecilia Miller, District 15 Secretary

Endorsement for Department First Vice President Wanda Kinder

At a regular meeting of District 13, American Legion Auxiliary Department of Missouri, held on March 3rd, 2024 in Ste. Genevieve, MO, Wanda Kinder was unanimously endorsed for the office of Department First Vice President for the year 2024-2025.

Wanda is eligible for membership in the American Legion Auxiliary through her father, Donald Kinder, who served in the United States Army Air Corps.

Wanda has been a continuous and active member of the American Legion Auxiliary for 24 years. On the Unit level, she served as Unit President seven years. She has been active as Chairman of the Girls State Committee for eight years. She served as Unit Sgt-at-Arms and has served on multiple program committees. She is currently serving as Junior Chairman and is on the Executive Board. She has completed the requirements as a VA volunteer accumulating over 550 volunteer hours.

Wanda received a Resolution from the State of Missouri in honor of the American Legion Post 253 Auxiliary Color Guard. She also received a Proclamation from the Governor of the State for the establishment of an all-female Color Guard.

On the District level, she is currently serving as District First Vice President with District Membership and District Legislative Chairmanships.

On the Department level, she is currently serving as Department Second Vice President and VA&R Co-Chairman. She has served as Department Historian, Department Chaplain, Department Co-Chairman Membership, and Southeast Division Membership Chairman.

Wanda has been a delegate or alternate to National and Department Conventions and regularly attends Fall conferences.

Wanda is an asset to her Unit, District 13, the Department of Missouri, and the American Legion Family. It is with pride that the members of District 13 endorse Wanda Kinder as a candidate for the office of First Vice President of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Missouri for the year 2024-2025.

Roselee Buatte
13th District President

Rita Stites
13th District Secretary

Endorsement for Department Second Vice President Lindy Picray

At the Winter Meeting on January 14, 2024, in Jefferson City, Missouri, Mrs. John (Lindy) Picray is endorsed for the office of Department Second Vice President for the 2024-2025 year.

Lindy gains her eligibility through her maternal grandfather Orborn Jones who served in the US Navy during WWII. Her husband John M. Picray, served in the US Navy from 2005-2009 during the Global War on Terror. In addition, her father, Gordon L Capps Jr, served in the US Army during the Vietnam War. Her paternal grandfather Gordon L. Capps Sr, served as a B-17 pilot in the US Army during WWII, and was considered MIA after he crash-landed his plane in Switzerland. He later escaped a Swiss internment camp. Born and raised in the State of California, Lindy moved to Missouri in 2012 to work at the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Missouri headquarters as part of the AmeriCorps program. She also joined Unit #5 in 2012 and served as Unit President from 2015-2017. She has served on the Unit level in various chairmanships and offices over her 12 years of membership.

Lindy has served as President of the Eighth District, a position she has held for three years. She was Vice President for two years, and has held various chairmanships in the District.

On the Department Level, Lindy has held the Scrapbooking Chair, Public Relations Chair, Gold Star Chair, and Education Chair. She has also served as a member of the Finance Committee, Girls Nation Selection Committee, and Chaplain. She is currently serving as Historian.

Lindy attends Department Conventions and Conferences as well as National Conventions.

Lindy and her husband John have 2 cats and live in Jefferson City. She is currently employed by the State of Missouri with the Secretary of State, as an Elections Specialist with the Elections Division.

It is with pride and confidence that District 8 unanimously endorses Lindy Picray as a candidate for American Legion Auxiliary Department Second Vice President for the 2024-2025 year.

Dorothy Goodin, District 8 President
Cindy Lambert, District 8 Secretary

Endorsement for Department Historian

Jaretta Holt

The Executive Committee of the 17th District met Sunday March 10, 2024 and unanimously endorsed Jaretta Holt for Department Historian of the American Legion Auxiliary, for the year 2024-2025.

Jaretta has a family history of military service. She gained her eligibility thru her grandfather, Mark Caudill, who served during WWI. She also has eligibility thru the service of her husband, Charles Holt. He served in the US Air Force from 1972 until retirement in 1992. He is a member of Post 38 American Legion District 17. Both of her grandfathers served during WWI and she has uncles who served during WWII and the Korean War in the US Army and US Navy. Her brother served in the US Navy during the Vietnam War. Her son Harvey served in the US Air Force as a K-9 officer in Iraq. Her grandson Jaden is currently serving in the US Air Force.

Jaretta is married to Charles Hoit, and they have 4 sons: Nathaniel Murphy, Harvey Holt, Marvin Holt and Christopher Holt. She has her mother who she care for at home. She is a paralegal and worked in her profession until 2011.

She joined the American Legion Auxiliary in 2013 as a member of unit 434 Nixa, MO then transferred to unit 38 Fair Grove, where she was instrumental in helping with the organizing of unit 38 Fair Grove. She has served her unit as Treasurer, Secretary and President. District 17 she has served as Treasurer and is currently serving as District President. She is currently serving as Department Fund Raising Chairman for her second year. Jaretta likes to smile and laugh and enjoys meeting people. She belongs to and attends Sac River Cowboy Church where she does what she loves which is cooking. She enjoys being a part of the American Legion Auxiliary helping our veterans and their families and working with the community. She is happy when she is volunteering and helping others. She loves her family, her 2 dogs, cooking and playing bingo. She also enjoys being a part of our great organization.

In consideration of her dedication and service to our organization we the members of District 17 know she will make the motto of the American Legion Auxiliary "Service Not Self" shine. We proudly endorse Jaretta Holt for Department Historian of the American Legion Auxiliary for the year 2024- 2025.

Maria Aaktuloy, District Vice President

Martha Achtenberg, District Secretary

Endorsement for Department Chaplain Michelle Bruns

At a regular meeting of the Ninth District, American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Missouri, held at Elsberry Unit 226, Elsberry, Missouri on Sunday, December 10, 2023, Michelle Bruns was unanimously endorsed for the office of Department Chaplain for the year 2024-2025.

Michelle gained her eligibility in the American Legion Auxiliary through her late father, Charles C. Coyner, Sr, a United States Army veteran of World War II. Michelle was raised in an active American Legion Family of Colwell-Harris-Paul Williams Unit 320 in Pacific since she joined as a Tiny Tot in 1967. Michelle is currently a member of Union Unit 297 in Union, Missouri.

On the Unit level, Michelle held every office and served 12 years as Unit 320 President. Some of the chairmanships she held included Americanism, Community Service, Poppy, and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

On the District level, Michelle served as Historian, First Vice President, President (two terms), and is currently serving her ninth year as Ninth District Treasurer. Michelle has served as chairman of Gold Star, Music, Past Presidents Parley, Ways and Means, and two years as the National Candidate Campaign Liaison from District 9.

On the Department level, Michelle is currently serving on the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation committee, She has served as chairman of Public Relations, Junior Activities, and Southeast Division Membership. Michelle also served as Department Color Bearer and Personal Page. She also served on the American Legion Auxiliary Missouri Girls State Staff for four years.

Throughout her many years of service, Michelle has attended numerous Fall Conferences and Department Conventions. She has also attended National Leadership Workshops and National Conventions. She served as a Missouri Page at the 1998 National Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, and as the Mailroom Director at the 2003 National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri.

Michelle and her husband Tom have two sons, two daughters-in-law and two granddaughters, who are also Junior members. Michelle has been employed as a Sales and Use Tax Accountant for the past 26 years.

In view of her continued dedication and service to the American Legion Family, the members of the Ninth District proudly endorse Michelle Bruns as a candidate for the office of American Legion Auxiliary Department Chaplain for the year 2024-2025.

Jan Irwin, Ninth District President
Lori Millam, Ninth District Secretary

Membership

Shanna Jelinek

Cathie Goth

The 2023-2024 Membership team would like to thank the members for their hard work on membership. We know it has been a challenge and we appreciate all you do.

Congratulations to the 12 Units who have reached or exceeded their membership goal. 30+ units only need five members to reach their goal.

We want to recognize those units that have made the last to Membership goals. The "American Legion Birthday" award for units who reached 85% by March 15, 2024 was achieved by 38 units. These include Unit 174, 208, 400, 444, 34, 251, 365, 58, 216, 487, 199, 288, 379, 499, 39, 150, 281, 153, 240, 298, 38, 306, 226, 297, 312, 313, 366, 370, 388, 209, 14, 230, 60, 78, 279, 305, 317, and 424. Congratulations to all of you for your hard work! These units will be placed in the prize drawings at the Department Convention in July.

There is still time to make the remaining goals. The next two goals are the "National Poppy Day" award to those units reaching 95% by May 26, 2024 and the "Flag Day" award to those units reaching 100% by June 14, 2024. I urge you to keep ringing those bells around Missouri for our veterans, active military and their families.

The following is an excerpt from the American Legion Auxiliary website blog by staff writer Alexa Freeman. In it she talks about renewing your membership and the impact your dues have. "The impact that your membership dues make each year is astounding. Your dues help in countless ways, including:

- 2.9 million hours volunteered in serving veterans and military
- Over \$14.7 million raised and spent on youth, scholarships, and community
- \$14 million raised and spent on veterans, military, and their families

If you haven't renewed for this year yet, the time is now!"

You as members still have many opportunities to recruit new members, rejoin a past member, or make that personal visit or phone call to a member who has not yet paid her dues. Membership is the responsibility of every member of The American Legion Family. Let's all work together to reach our goals and make this great organization even better as we "Let Freedom Ring-Because of Those Who Serve".

Membership cont....

Shanna Jelinek and Cathie Goth

Below is a membership plea from National President Lisa Williamson to remain in constant contact with your unit membership.

Dear American Legion Auxiliary members,

If the trend continues, the 2024 membership year can be a special one for the American Legion Auxiliary. At the end of 2023, we were able to “stop the slide” and were able to boast a gain in membership numbers. This demonstrates the proven success of personal contact, remaining visible in our communities, and remembering to “Just Ask!”

I am passionate about our mission of supporting our veterans, our military, their families, and our communities. And I, through my travels, I know that our ALA members are as well. Everywhere I go, I see that our Mission remains in forefront for our members!

Shortly after 9/11 nearly 23 years ago, our combined membership with Legion, Auxiliary and SAL was pushing 5 million members; as of today, we sit around 3.1 million members. Wouldn't it be nice to have 5 million members to help support our programs??

A larger American Legion Family - Legion, Auxiliary and Sons - benefits all Americans. This means more are embracing the "Be the One" mission to stop veteran suicide. It means talking about how it's okay to get mental health help. It means saying “it's okay to not be ok!” It means more ALA members to work our great programs such as ALA Girls State, participating in Veterans Creative Arts Festivals, both locally and nationally, promoting our scholarships, and of course, working with the future of our organization, our Juniors.

We are attracting younger members, many with families. And most don't have time to attend meetings and be super active. I ask that you “give them permission” to be card-carrying members by simply paying their dues, volunteering when time allows, or not. There is absolutely nothing wrong in that; remember the larger our organization, the louder our voice when it comes to our lobbying efforts at home and in our nation's capital.

I think we can all agree, we would like to see the 2024 membership year continue growing. This is where we need your help! You can [renew just as easily here](#), or you might consider a [Paid Up for Life membership](#). If you are not a current member, you can join simply by [clicking here](#). As I said earlier, personal contact matters. Legion Family members who are welcomed by active and engaged posts, units and squadrons in their communities are more likely to stay active.

With your help, I know that we can do it!

Yours In Service,

Lisa Williamson

2023-24 American Legion Auxiliary National President

Washington Conference 2024

Claudia Goodin

I have just returned from the Annual American Legion Washington DC Conference. Monday. I attended the Legislative Commission session at the Conference. We were presented with a new American Legion Legislative Agenda. Tuesday and Wednesday the Missouri delegation visited both senators' offices and various other representatives. We presented The American Legion Legislative Agenda for the 118th Congress. 2nd Session and it is as follows as follows:

Suicide Prevention & Mental Health – PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Program (H.R. 2768) and VA Zero Suicide Demonstration Act (H.R. 1639)

Alternative Treatments – TBI and PTSD Treatment Act (H.R. 105)

VA Health Modernization – The Department of Veterans Affairs Electronic Health Record Modernization Improvement Act (H.R. 592)

Pact Act: Implementation & Oversight – The American legion urges Congress to provide the necessary oversight and funding to ensure VA has resources to properly implement this legislation.

Safeguard Veterans Benefits – Veterans Benefits Improvement Act (H.R. 1530)

Concurrent Receipt – The Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282)

Guard & Reserve GI Bill Parity – The American Legion believes that every day in uniform counts and urges Congress to recognize the service of Guard and Reserve servicemembers as eligible for the GI Bill.

GI Bill for Honorable Service – The American legion urges congress to correct this statutory incongruity by amending U.S. Code to allow access to VA educational assistance to veterans with general under honorable conditions discharges.

Military Quality of Life – Military Housing Readiness Council Act (H.R. S.2047)
Pay the Coast Guard – Pay our Coast Guard Parity Act (H.R. 2693)

Access to healthcare of overseas military and families – Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act (H.R. 1045)

Improving the military TAP (Transition Assistance Program) – VET-TEC Authorization Act of 2023 (H.R. 669)

Washington Conference 2024 cont...

Claudia Goodin

Protect the American Flag - The American Legion urges Congress to approve an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the US Flag. Senate Joint Resolution 34)

Please contact your respective Representatives and Senators and urge them to support and pass the agenda items. Sign up for Action Alerts on The American Legion's Grassroots Action Center. Visit it now and often.

BE THE ONE

Leadership

Lori Millam

As stated in President Sheridan's bio: "It is up to us to teach others about our organization by promoting what we do as we work together to Let Freedom Ring - Because of Those Who Serve."

Each one of you can become a LEADER. You joined the American Legion Auxiliary because of your interest in what the organization stands for. Become involved in the Unit and District meetings. Listen to the reports. Join in the activities and volunteer your services. Make known your special talents. If you are interested in promoting the American Legion Auxiliary, you have taken the first step in being a leader. Keep in mind, leadership skills can be learned, and leaders may evolve.

Would you like to learn more about working the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary? The ALA Academy is a great way to start, and it is also online. The Academy courses are designed to help members learn online and at no cost. The Academy offers two options: 1) Self-paced courses that you can take from any device and on your own time with no need to pre-register. 2) Live virtual webinars are now also offered. These courses are free, but you will need to register in advance. The ALA Academy is online at www.alaforveterans.org

Soon it will be time to nominate a committee to select names for 2024-25 officers. Remember to consult your Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules and follow the proper procedures. Remember, that the Nominating Committee is the only committee that the Unit or District President cannot be a member of.

I am looking forward to receiving and reading the Unit Narratives and all the District Narratives AND the entries for Unit Member of the Year that I have received by May 1, 2024.

We can make a difference when we all work together. A positive attitude creates positive results! Support and encourage each other as success will certainly follow.

American Legion Auxiliary Department of Missouri
Deceased members reported January 1 to April 19, 2024

DistrictUnit Number			Name	CITY	State
	MO	UNIT 1000	Roberta Hughes	Turney	MO
1	MO	UNIT 0174	Betty J Hinds	Maywood	MO
2	MO	UNIT 0007	Pamelia A Tietjens	Brunswick	MO
2	MO	UNIT 0034	Theresa L Claassen	Ashland	MO
2	MO	UNIT 0057	Marilyn Stanley	Brookfield	MO
5	MO	UNIT 0021	Shirley Linton	Overland Park	KS
5	MO	UNIT 0021	Helen F White	Independence	MO
5	MO	UNIT 0021	Sadonna L Pilgrim	Lees Summit	MO
5	MO	UNIT 0021	Joann I Ekeberg	Brown Deer	WI
6	MO	UNIT 0014	Shirley J Bilbruck	Clinton	MO
6	MO	UNIT 0131	Barbara M VanDuine	Warrensburg	MO
6	MO	UNIT 0488	Edith L Blessman	Belton	MO
7	MO	UNIT 0223	Kim Widebrook	Overland Park	KS
7	MO	UNIT 0223	ElvaDean Erdman	Higginsville	MO
7	MO	UNIT 0305	Margaret M. Roark	Cole Camp	MO
8	MO	UNIT 0005	Laverne J Sanders	Jefferson City	MO
8	MO	UNIT 0152	Mary Wren	Ashland	MO
8	MO	UNIT 0202	Barbara Valentine	Columbia	MO
8	MO	UNIT 0424	Cheryl E. Rice	Ashland	MO
9	MO	UNIT 0218	Wendy O Wildberger	Washington	MO
9	MO	UNIT 0366	Leona Hughes	New Haven	MO
10	MO	UNIT 0208	Bonnie M Walker	Manchester	MO
13	MO	UNIT 0133	Victoria A Buchheit	Perryville	MO
13	MO	UNIT 0133	Ruth E Obermann	Fredericktown	MO
13	MO	UNIT 0133	Shirley M Buchheit	Perryville	MO
13	MO	UNIT 0150	Helen M Jokerst	Sainte Genevieve	MO
14	MO	UNIT 0063	Gail Patricia Hennecke	Cape Girardeau	MO
14	MO	UNIT 0114	Dorothy Lynch	Sikeston	MO
14	MO	UNIT 0153	Ila Taylor	Poplar Bluff	MO
14	MO	UNIT 0153	Betty Pruitt	Poplar Bluff	MO
15	MO	UNIT 0209	Helen Bailey	Carthage	MO
15	MO	UNIT 0372	Loretta H Koontz	Lockwood	MO
15	MO	UNIT 0372	E Loraine Sands	Lockwood	MO
15	MO	UNIT 0372	Mary Prettyman	Lockwood	MO
15	MO	UNIT 0372	Virginia L. VanRaalte	Lockwood	MO
15	MO	UNIT 0419	Sherrill I Conway	Freistatt	MO
16	MO	UNIT 0030	Pauline Forbes	Mountain Grove	MO
16	MO	UNIT 0099	Janeen Reinbott	Salem	MO

2024 DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

HOUSING REQUEST

July 10-14, 2024

“July 10 check in is for those who wish to play in the PPC Golf tournament”

HOUSING/HOSPITALITY/CAUCUS ROOM & VENDOR TABLE REQUEST

Hilton St. Louis Airport

10330 Natural Bridge Road

Saint Louis, MO 63134-3303

Phone: 314-426-5500 Group: American Legion

Online Reservations can be made by using the link on the Department website.

Make reservations directly with the hotel, using a credit card for confirmation be sure to mention you are with The American Legion.

****CUTOFF DATE FOR ALL HOUSING RESERVATIONS IS JUNE 19, 2024****

(The group room rates are not guaranteed after the cutoff date)

Cost per night is \$92.00 (plus Sales and Lodging tax)

Check in time 3:00 p.m. No exceptions

.....
HOSPITALITY ROOM

We will have two large, shared Hospitality Rooms one for the Candidates and the other for 10th District.

Please call Department Adjutant for details

.....
DISTRICT CAUCUS ROOMS

Will be assigned by Department Adjutant at Convention

.....
Table Request for Vendors, Post and Auxiliary

All table requests will be reserved through Department Headquarters.

Please call Theresa Boss to make your request 573-761-4143

Vendor Tables are limited.

Deadline for table request: *June 17, 2024*



Department will be hosting an ONLINE AUCTION.

We need your help getting items for the auction. Please visit your local merchants and ask for an item to auction off or even a gift card. (Gift Cards need to be from a chain store/restaurant like Lowes, Applebee's, etc.) Your Unit or District could even make a gift basket.

Once you have your items please take a picture of it. Make sure the picture is clear. You may need to take more than one. Send the pictures to Fundraising Chairman Jaretta Holt at murphyjaretta@yahoo.com or Shanna Jelinek at sjelinek33@gmail.com. Send photos by June 30th.

Auction will start July 1 and will end the Saturday Night of the Convention.



How it works: When it get closer to the start of the auction, another flyer will be sent out with the website you can access to bid on auction items along with instructions. You will make your bid and can watch the item to see if you are still the highest bidder. You will not be able to see who is bidding against you. At convention there will be laptops set up so that you can still check your bid, or for those that do not have the capability to go online.

If you have any questions please contact the Fundraising Chairman Jaretta Holt at 417-576-5982

A Family Mystery Solved - 21 Years Later! - SGT Gerald W. Zdarsky - WWII Army Air Force

Tori Vernau

I'm well aware that I nag veterans about several things: recording their stories, making arrangements, letting loved ones know what they want when they leave us, and this story in my own family may be one of those.....or it may be a case of a wife who just didn't care to deal with things in her grief. But it ends well, I promise.

Late last year, I found, in talking with my cousin, that my beloved uncle, a decorated WWII veteran, was not buried in a national cemetery, nor a private one either. She shared that unbeknownst to her at the time, her mother decided to have him cremated and scattered by the funeral home - and that was that.

I was devastated, as I had plans to order a wreath for his grave if he was in a national cemetery, and wanted to honor his memory. But of course it's more than that, and it was hard to believe that the honor he could have had, at no cost to her, was lost. I even drafted a note about how to order a memorial marker and almost sent it to her. His death was in 2002 when I was not invited to the visitation or funeral (there weren't any), and the event passed by as if it never happened.

Earlier this month, my cousin texted me a picture of his marker, wondering who had ordered it.....it is in Bath National Cemetery, New York (near where they lived in Buffalo), and all the information on it is correct. I look at it and can't find anything that indicates that it is a memorial marker, so I say well, if this marker were at Jefferson Barracks, HE would be there too. So of course I called the next morning and indeed, my uncle, through no effort of his family, has a place in a National Cemetery, per his own wishes! Why?

Well, the cemetery explained that my uncle had been buried with 11 other indigent/unclaimed veterans from a funeral home 10 years after his death. He is listed as "unmarried at the time of his death". Just as our state does and the VA supports, New York State has a program to inter those veterans who are "stuck" in funeral homes as "unclaimed". Apparently, my aunt had only verbally instructed the funeral home what to do, and like anything else, that didn't happen because the paperwork wasn't done. At least, that's our best guess, since my aunt is no longer with us to tell us what really happened.

A Family Mystery Solved - 21 Years Later! - SGT Gerald W. Zdarsky - WWII Army Air Force cont...

Tori Vernau

I then contacted the New York Patriot Guard, just to see if maybe, just maybe, they could come up with any pictures. They did, 142 of them! If you've never gotten to go to a ceremony for these veterans, the picture of my uncle's is here, from 2012. And, they tracked down the flag as well, which will make its way out to my cousin in California to be presented to his daughter by the California Patriot Guard. At last, after almost 22 years, her family will have the closure that some of us take for granted. You can bet that they will not.

I've been working on a couple of other things to honor his military accomplishments - which might be fodder for another article! But for now, it sure is nice to know that a SGT that earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and 3 Air Medals, rests in peace with his comrades at a National Cemetery. It's already a Fabulous 2024.



Unit 133 hosts baby shower for local veterans

Perryville, MO - District 13, Unit 133 members hosted a baby shower for Lyza and Joel Koesterer at the American Legion Post on January 28, 2024. The baby shower was attended by ALA members and Lyza and Joel's families. Lyza and Joel received many beautiful and essential gifts for their precious baby girl who is due to arrive in March 2024.

Lyza and Joel's love story started in 2020 while serving on state emergency duty orders in St. Louis, MO. Joel was taking accountability for all the soldiers on the bus ride leaving Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis.



on the bus ride leaving Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis. He got the last seat on the bus, which coincidentally, happened to be right next to Lyza. There on that bus ride, they began to kindle their friendship over the next several months, which eventually developed into a relationship. They started dating in early 2021, got married in the fall of 2021, bought their first home together in 2022 and became pregnant in 2023.

They spend their time now, outside the military, serving their local community of Cape Girardeau, MO as first responders. Joel is a police officer. Lyza is a 911 dispatcher. In their time off, they tend to their small hobby farm, go to church, exercise and refine their homesteading skills. The couple also spend time serving Moonier-Reddick, American Legion Post 133, in Perryville, MO where they volunteer on the Executive Board, Honor Guard and various events and functions.

Joel is a Veteran of 11 years, having served 3 years in the Missouri National Guard and 8 years with the United States Marine Corps. During his time in the Marine Corps, Joel was stationed in Southern California, Southern Florida and various countries overseas. Joel came back to Missouri in 2020 and enlisted in the National Guard as a Military Police Officer, which is where he eventually met Lyza.

Lyza spent 8 years in the National Guard. She served in various units around the State of Missouri, a year with the National Guard Bureau in Virginia and a year in Iraq. Lyza was trained as an Administrative Specialist as well as a Military Police Officer.

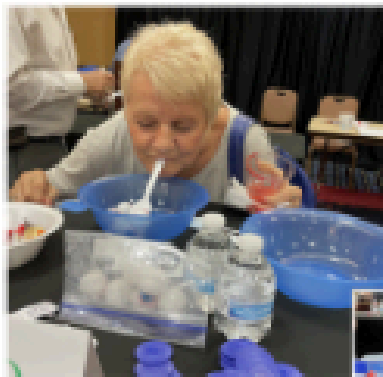
We wish Lyza, Joel and baby girl Koesterer much love, laughter and joy.

Department Commander Mark Clark and Department Second Vice President Wanda Kinder attend District 13 meeting

Below are photos of Department Commander Mark Clark and Department Second Vice President Wanda Kinder's visit to District 13.



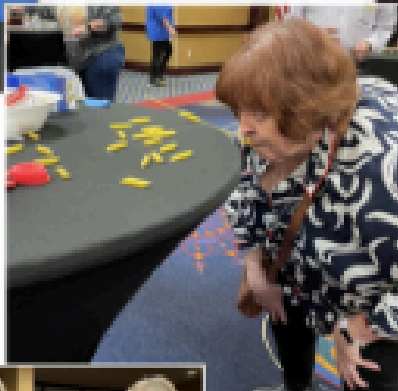
It's Not All Business at Fall Conference!



Above, Linda Maddox, District 1 president & Department Finance Committee) uses a spoon in her mouth to transfer ping pong balls from one bowl to another.

American Legion Auxiliary Department of Missouri

Below, Past Department President Marsha Mooney tries to pick up penne pasta with the spaghetti noodle in her mouth.



Above, Tori Vernau tries to bounce balls into the cups.

Below, Lori tries her hand at balls in the cups.



Right, 2nd Vice Wanda Kinder tries to transfer ping pong balls from one bowl to another.



Above, Lori Yount gets ready to pick up penne pasta with a spaghetti noodle.

Well, **SOME** business had to take place...

American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation Senators Avery Smith and Ysabella Olsen give remarks at Department of Missouri Fall Conference. (Ysabella was elected Girls Nation president for 2023)

