

REPORT OF THE 90TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
EIGHTH DISTRICT AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
DEPARTMENT OF NEBRASKA
FEBRUARY 18, 2012
CLAUDE H. MONTGOMERY POST 58, VALLEY, NEBRASKA

Registration began at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 18, at the Valley American Legion Post Home. Coffee and rolls were served from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. A total of \$8.00 was charged convention attendees, with \$5.00 going towards lunch.

The Auxiliary business meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by District Eight President, Sally Johnson. With colors in place, a salute was rendered followed by District Eight Historian, Marlene Ingram, reading of the MIA/POW directive. The invocation was then given by District Eight Chaplain, Patty Polson. District Eight Vice President, Stacy Pohl, lead the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the singing of the National Anthem lead by District Secretary-Treasurer, Kathy Mazur. The Preamble was lead by President Johnson.

President Johnson introduced our page, Kathy Iske from Gretna Unit 216. She then introduced the judges for the competitions: History Book – Marlene Ingram and Sue Ellen Hammer; Publicity Book – Bev Harral and Rose Sheehy; Poppy Centerpiece – Patty Gottsch and Louise Nichols; Auditing Committee – Jenny Johnson and Mary Bauder; and Courtesy Resolutions – Helen Bauder and Merriellen Bourn.

Hosting Unit 58s Historian, Marianne Nielsen welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance; and Vice President Pohl gave her thank you response.

Special guests were introduced: Department President, Donna Hatfield; Department Vice President, Cheryl Vap; Department Chaplain, Rita Wagner; Department Membership Chairman, Joann Sieck; Department VA&R Chairman, Sharon Scott; Department Poppy Chairman, Kathy Mazur; Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home (ENVH) Representative, Louise Nichols; VA Medical Center Deputy Representative, Marlene Ingram; and a very special guest, Retired Major Doris Burns.

Past District Presidents were asked to stand and be recognized.

District Secretary-Treasurer, Mazur conducted the roll call of units. There were 30 district members present at the meeting representing 8 of the 17 units in District Eight. Although the convention was being hosted in Valley, the Valley Auxiliary members were absent from the meetings.

Motion carried to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last convention. Treasurer's report was given with a balance of \$1,721.42.

Reports of County Presidents were called for. Lois Musel, Douglas County President, gave her report. Kathy Iske, Sarpy County President reported on their activities. Recently elected

abroad. More than four tons of packages have been shipped since the beginning of the project. She refers to the project as a labor of love, providence and grace. The participants who create the packages are themselves lifted in spirits for knowing the good they are doing for our active duty military.

ENVH Representative Nichols delivered the last of the poppies today. Louise is organizing a training session to encourage more poppy makers. She had a needs list available to be picked up. The biggest demand was for large size sweat pants. The Home was recently inspected, and for a second year in a row, there were zero deficiencies. There are many ways we can help the residents: Adopt a Vet and remember them on birthdays and holidays, invite residents to legion functions you are planning; come for donuts and coffee on Sundays with the residents; most of all they love having visitors. The residents held a Rock and Roll-athon that netted \$400 to be given to the Red Cross at Offutt. Offutt does many things to help at the home.

Marlene Ingram stood in for Veterans' Hospital Rep. Gertrude Johansen. The Christmas Gift Shop this year served 189 veterans. The value of gifts was over \$5,000. There were 420 volunteer service hours given by 15 units and nine posts. Sixty-seven patients were rewarded at dollar days. During Veterans Appreciation Week, 300 sandwiches were assembled at the Papillion Legion Post Home, and all were handed out at the hospital. There is a need for items for the coffee cart, and activities cart, as well as comfort items that patients could use. Money donations are always welcome. They can always use more volunteers on a daily basis.

VA&R Chairman Scott encouraged all units and posts to be giving to the programs that support the hospitals and homes. Dollar Days is an Auxiliary program, while Gifts for Yanks is a joint project with the Legion and S.A.L. At this point in time, 987 hours have been given to the homes and hospitals serving 7,786 veterans. We need to send in our stories about what we do for the veterans. The new Volunteer Handbooks were handed out. National has set a goal to increase volunteers by 10 per department this year. National is focusing on homeless veterans, and the Creative Arts Festival. The Ride 2 Recovery funds go directly for the veterans use; there are no administration costs involved.

Department Membership Chairman Sieck told us that the members in the Department of Nebraska are the best of all. We need to grow to be able to do great things for our veterans. Membership is everyone's responsibility. We are challenged to get our state up to 95% by March 14. Right now we are second in the nation, and we would like to stay at the top. President Johnson added that we should emphasize the benefits available to members and make sure to take advantage of the ones we have.

Department Poppy Chairman Mazur exhibited the Poppy Canisters that can be made from Pringles cans. The labels should be downloaded from the National Website. Also, there are still packets of seeds, if anyone is interested in planting their own poppy flower bed.

Department Chaplain Wagner requested more prayers for the Department President's prayer book that will be presented at Department Convention in June. Get them in early! She also encouraged the units to hold Gold Star programs for those special members.

in Washington DC, and lobbies for the passage of bills that support the veterans and their families. Some of the subjects they are focusing on are: the revision of the federal charter for "Blue Star Mothers" in order to repeal some of the restrictions, and, also, allowing them US citizenship in some cases; Veterans compensation cost of living increase; and the Star Spangled Banner Resolution respecting the singing of the National Anthem when used in broadcasting. They are also keeping an eye on any spending cuts for the military.

Department President Hatfield encouraged everyone to come to Department Convention in June to celebrate this year's accomplishments. She compared working the programs and not publicizing the work like the proverbial tree falling in the forest – does it make a sound. Let's get our name out in the public so they can see the impact we make. Membership is an ongoing process – the excitement we show instills that in others and influences them if it is the type of group they want to belong to. She would like to see every unit in Nebraska apply for the National President's Award for Excellence. Those units who have won the award over years don't do any more than what we have accomplished ourselves. She also asked that we support Michael Helm from Nebraska who will be up for American Legion National Commander in the near future. It is an expensive endeavor and all donations are appreciated.

The March for the Little Red Schoolhouse was held and a short break followed. Donations amounted to \$39.00.

After returning from break, Chaplain Polson conducted a tribute to Gold Star members. Each received a long stem yellow rose.

President Sally informed us of a resolution that was made during the Mid-Year Conference. The District President is allowed to appoint a representative from the district for DEC meetings when neither the President nor Vice President can attend. Priority should be given to the other district officers first, and Department must be notified of any substitute.

Motion carried to donate \$100.00 to the Department President's Project. That project is donating funds to the department Voc Tech Scholarship.

The auditing committee reported that the treasury books were in order. Awards for History Book were: 1st Place, Omaha Unit 1; no other entries. Prayer Book was: 1st Place, Millard Unit 374; no other entries. Publicity Book was: 1st Place, Millard Unit 374; no other entries. Poppy Centerpiece was: 1st Place, Millard Unit 374; 2nd Place, Gretna Unit 216.

Membership Chairman Sieck presented certificates to the units that met membership goal dates. President Johnson presented a certificate of excellence for Rennea Jensen-Brown of Fort Calhoun for recruiting 25 new members this year. Her name will be submitted to National for the Silver Brigade Award. President Johnson presented The Rosewood Gavel to Springfield Unit 143. It is presented to the unit in each district having the highest percentage of membership goal into department by September 1. A unit winning the gavel three consecutive years keeps possession as Springfield has accomplished.

The nomination of officers took place, and all officers will retain their positions for the

get their votes (\$) in. Chaplain Polson gave the closing prayer. With colors in place, salute was rendered; and the meeting was adjourned for lunch and the afternoon Family Session.

District Eight Convention Family Session was called to order by District Eight American Legion Commander, Jim Linkletter, at 1:00 p.m. With colors in place, salute was given. Invocation was given by Auxiliary Chaplain, Polson, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance lead by District SAL Commander, Harold Schafer. Explanation of the POW/MIA table was given by Vice Commander John Henry Percy. Auxiliary Vice President Pohl lead the preamble.

Commander Linkletter, President Johnson and SAL Commander Schafer introduced State and District Officers and Chairmen present at the afternoon session.

Post Everlasting was conducted by Vice Commander Percy, Vice President Pohl, SAL Commander Schafer, and Legion Chaplain, John Wenninghoff. Taps were played.

Department Commander, George Cyboron, addressed the session telling us that success requires involvement. Use personal contact to reach out to get membership. There is a bill in the Nebraska legislature now that will require all schools in the state to recite the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of the school day.

Department Assistant Adjutant, Brent Hagel-Pitt, announced the slate of upcoming events for the Legion Family including a "Family Night" during National Convention and the site of Mid-Year Conference next year at Nebraska City's Lied Center.

President Hatfield reminded everyone to keep applications for all of the organizations on hand at all times. You never know when you will come upon a potential member. Nebraska is in second place nationally and has been in first place in the division since the beginning of the year.

Past Department Detachment Commander, Frank Vail, was introduced in order to present the Midwest National SAL Vice Commander, Danny Smith, to the assembly. Smith spoke of his appreciation to those who always show up and are dedicated to this organization. There is nothing we can't get accomplished as a family. Commitment is important. The SAL has hit the \$5 million mark being donated to CWF. There is a homecoming fundraiser planned in his honor this April 21 at Papillion Post 32.

VA Hospital Deputy Representative Ingram repeated the information from the morning session. She also invited members to come visit the veterans in the hospital. There is a need for van drivers and other volunteers daily.

District Legion Children and Youth Chairman, Wenninghoff, gave thanks to Kathy Mazur for the flyers she has created for Boys and Girls State, Jr. Law Cadet, and Oratorical. The Boys and Girls State flyer was sent to Posts in the department's January mailing. He personally takes the flyers to the Omaha schools to let the students know about these programs.

District Special Olympic Chairman, Jack Egermeier, gave us the change in date for this year's Bowling fundraiser. It will be held on March 10 now, at Chops Bowl, beginning at 11:00 a.m. It is a fun time for everyone even if you aren't bowling. The monies go directly to help

Past Department Commander, Ron Ingram, introduced Andrew, a representative from the Stormchasers ball club, to talk about special group rates. He encouraged us to take advantage in setting up group outings. Groups of 20 or more are given special rates. Papillion is scheduling a Veterans night for their Post on March 20. It's a great park with plenty to do for all ages.

Legionnaire Bruce Husted who was instrumental in the planning and fundraising for the ENVH Memorial Garden, informed us that the first phase of the project is almost complete. There is an Eagle Scout Project to install flag poles from the Thomas Fitzgerald Home to the ENVH. The group needs to raise \$250 to install the poles. Motion carried that the District Legion donate \$150 to the project. Motion carried that the District Auxiliary donate \$100 to the project.

ENVH Representative Nichols reminded everyone of the District's monthly ice cream social at the home. Ideally she would like to see Post members come the same month as their Auxiliary is serving cookies. The District Legion has not followed through on covering the cost of the ice cream. If these socials are to continue, the money needs to be paid for the ice cream. Will the District Legion be able to foot the bill for it. It costs approximately \$160 each quarter to purchase the ice cream for the residents. Millard SAL was recognized and \$160 for one quarter of the year; Herman Post was recognized and also donated for one quarter of the year; and the Millard Post followed with their donation for one quarter of the year.

Sarpy County Commander, Larry Doyle, reported on County Government Day. This year there were two Government Days. The first was in April on the old schedule and then one in November to start on a new schedule to switch to fall. Special presentation after lunch was given by JAG lawyers. He expressed his appreciation to those who help make Government Day happen: Charleen Marchand, John Henry Percy, and Sue Donohue from the County Service Officers office. Only four schools in the county took advantage of the program last fall.

Special guest speaker, American Legion Rider Liaison Rod Sonnichsen, addressed the convention. The Riders is a program of the American Legion and all "family" (Legion, Auxiliary and SAL) are eligible to belong. There are guidelines to the program and it is self-funding. The membership requirements are that you are a current member of one of the three organizations and that you ride a motorcycle 350 or above. Their main objective is raising funds for the Legacy Scholarship. Last year \$26,000 was collected for scholarships. Having a Riders chapter attracts younger members as well as new members in general. There are presently 19 chapters in the state; and in the next 30 days, Millard will have its own chapter. It only takes five members to start a new chapter. Collection at convention netted \$98 for the Legacy fund.

Posts and Units were given an opportunity to voice their upcoming events and fundraisers. Commander Linkletter also announced the resolution that will be presented at Department Convention this summer to consolidate District 8 and District 14 together.

Mazur led the assembly in singing "God Bless America" followed by a closing prayer by Chaplain Wenninghoff. Colors were retired by the Valley American Legion Color Guard. The convention was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted