

# SIoux FALLS POST 15



May 2026

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Editor: Diane Diekman [diane@dianediekman.com](mailto:diane@dianediekman.com)

## COMMANDER'S CORNER

*Patrick Branca*

This is my final newsletter article as the 2025-2026 Post 15 Commander. Reflecting on my tenure in this role, I have considered both the achievements and challenges encountered, along with opportunities for improvement. Success in this position is dependent upon the efforts of numerous individuals within the Legion, Auxiliary, Sons, Riders, Chorus, and our families. Each event conducted was built on the foundation established by previous commanders and leaders. We strive to make incremental improvements each year, and I hope progress continues based on the work accomplished during my term.

The scope and scale of contributions made by our Post members is remarkable. Our activities have included fundraisers, social events, pancake breakfasts, comedy nights, dances, raffles, funerals, color guard ceremonies, veteran visits, participation in the Chamber of Commerce, community service at the Avera Pantry, river cleanups, Four Chaplains services, the 107th birthday celebration, fairs, car shows, gun shows, farm shows, among many others. Whether you participated in one event or several, your involvement was sincerely valued. Continued engagement is essential, as active involvement contributes to a longer life and keeps our minds young!

I am grateful for the trust placed in me through my election as Commander this past year. Thank you for the opportunity to serve alongside you. I wish each of you well and look forward to Mark's leadership as your new Commander.

## UNIT 15 AUXILIARY PRESIDENT

*Deb Metzger*

Things are hopping at our Auxiliary. The Legion Family hosted the District 7 meeting at our Post on March 28. We had a good turnout, great food prepared by our Auxiliary, and a lot of good information shared. We learned what other District 7 units are doing to support our veterans. NEC Mary Jo Stier talked about the first All Women's Honor Flight on April 13-15.

At our April meeting, Kellie Gillespie of the Sons of the Legion presented our Unit with a check for \$350 to assist with Girls State. Thanks to Sons of the Legion for your donation. April 11 was the Women's Veteran's Wellness Retreat. Our Auxiliary helped with registration and donated door prizes.

The Department Convention is in Aberdeen June 19-21. This is where the decisions are made for our Auxiliary. One big issue will be a vote to increase the State Auxiliary dues by \$5.00 - this is necessary to keep our State Auxiliary financially viable. The proposed increase is a small price to pay to continue to assist our Veterans. There has not been an increase for quite some time.

Post Everlasting is May 3. We will honor five of our members who passed away last year. If you have never attended this solemn event, it's worth your time. Up next is Poppy Day on May 23. Mayor Paul TenHaken has issued a proclamation to declare May 23 as Poppy Day. Jane Mairose does a great job promoting Poppy Day along with many of our Unit 15 members. Give Jane a call at 605-682-1222 if you want to volunteer to help hand out poppies. May 25 is Memorial Day where we remember our deceased Veterans. Keep an eye out for services in Sioux Falls and the surrounding communities.

At our monthly meeting on May 12 at 7 p.m., we will elect our new leadership. If you haven't attended for a while, please consider this my personal invitation. We are doing great things and would love for you to attend and become a part of it. Our Unit endorsed Susie Learning, Nancy Andres, and me for State offices. Susie is running for SD State Historian, Nancy is running for Chair of the Finance Committee, and I am running for 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of the State Auxiliary. Please attend the State Convention to support us - we are the largest Unit in South Dakota and we need to be a part of the decision making.

## 1ST VICE COMMANDER *Dick Mass*

Update on the Michael J Fitzmaurice Medal of Honor statue project: Letters have been sent to all South Dakota American Legion Posts requesting support. The statue will be Installed on the downtown Sculpture Walk on May 2 between 5 and 10 a.m. An unveiling of the statue is being planned at a later date. Also of note, Michael will be the Grand Marshall of the Independence Day parade.

The buzz within Post 15 of late seems focused on recruitment and retention. Several methods have been presented at various levels without much traction. Should other options be considered? It is time to try new and different approaches.

A review of Post 15 membership shows the level of active involvement as fewer than 100 members. This isn't just Post 15; other organizations face the same reality. When individuals are involved in the day-to-day operation of an organization, their commitment remains high. They feel and desire to be an active participant in the organization's events and goals. Perhaps adding opportunities for active involvement would increase membership. To promote increased committee activity, I proposed developing an ad hoc Finance Committee until bylaws are in place for a standing committee.

In the near future, we should undertake an evaluation of needs for our organization. I believe our committees should include Public Relations, Media (Social and Public), Marketing, and Communications. **Knowing and Using our Resources** comes from personal experience and is a great theme to carry forward.

## SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

### *Kelly Gillespie, Detachment Commander*

The Sons of the American Legion Squadron 15 continues to take pride in one of the core pillars of our mission: supporting our nation's youth. This commitment is not just something we talk about, it's something we put into action within our Legion Family and community.

Last month, I had the privilege of representing our Squadron by presenting donation checks at the monthly meetings of both the American Legion Post and the Legion Auxiliary. These contributions were designated to support two outstanding youth programs: Boys State and Girls State. Both programs play a vital role in developing leadership skills, civic responsibility, and a deeper understanding of government for our young people. It is truly an honor for Squadron 15 to invest in these future leaders. By supporting Boys State and Girls State, we are helping shape the next generation with the values and knowledge they need to succeed and contribute positively to our communities and our country.

Thank you to all our members who continue to support these efforts. Your dedication ensures that we live out our mission and make a meaningful impact on the lives of our nation's youth.

Check us out on Facebook at "Sons of the American Legion Squadron 15 Sioux Falls." Like and follow to keep up with what's happening.

## Veterans Visits

Veterans and spouses, we need you to exchange your military stories with those in retirement homes and hospice care. The visits last an hour or two. Call the Post 15 office at 605-336-3470 for more information. All are invited to come and join the conversations. Current visits scheduled:

May 18 - Stoneybrook, 4501 East Pampas Place (12-18) @ 1:30 p.m.

May 27 - Edgewood Assisted Living, 3409 E 5th St @ 2 p.m.

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[www.siouxfallslegion.org](http://www.siouxfallslegion.org)



Post 15 website

[www.facebook.com/siouxfallsamericanlegionpost15](https://www.facebook.com/siouxfallsamericanlegionpost15)

[HTTP://WWW.LEGION.ORG/JOIN/PUFL](http://WWW.LEGION.ORG/JOIN/PUFL)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS—MAY 2026

- 3 (Sun) Legion pancake breakfast & bake sale 8:30-noon—Alliance  
3 (Sun) Girls State orientation 1 pm—Alliance  
3 (Sun) Boys State orientation 3 pm—Alliance  
3 (Sun) Annual Post Everlasting service 6:30 pm  
5 (Tue) Legion Post 15 meeting 6:30 pm  
11 (Mon) Honor Guard breakfast 7:30 am—Fryn' Pan  
12 (Tue) Legion Auxiliary meeting 7 pm  
13 (Wed) Legion Riders meeting 7 pm  
14 (Thur) Membership Committee meeting 6 pm  
14 (Thur) Sons of the Legion meeting 7 pm  
19 (Tue) Legion Family Social 5 pm, dinner 6 pm —Alliance—\$10  
Pork loin— reservations by May 14  
25 (Mon) Executive Board meeting 7 pm  
26 (Tue) Auxiliary Social 5 pm, dinner 6 pm, bingo 6:30—Alliance  
Open to the public; reservations required for dinner

Every Monday—Singing Legionnaires practice 7 pm  
Every Wednesday—Ladies bridge 12-4 pm  
Office is open Monday-Friday 11-3 pm (except holidays)

### Save the Date

June 18-22—Department convention—Aberdeen  
July 4—Independence Day parade—downtown Sioux Falls  
July 8—Reading Declaration of Independence—S.D. Battleship



**JULY 4, 2026 –  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY  
USA**

We celebrate our nation's 250th birthday all year long.

Upcoming America 250 events include the Independence Day parade in downtown Sioux Falls at 10 a.m. on Saturday, July 4, and a ceremony at 4:30 p.m. on July 8 at the Battleship South Dakota Memorial to read the Declaration of Independence. Sign up for the parade at <https://sfindependenceparade.com>.



Commander Patrick Branco presenting Jim Minnig with award for exceptional dedication and support of the American Legion's Four Pillars. Legion birthday party on March 21, 2026. Photo by Al Arndt.

## SHOOTING SPORTS *Larry Panning*

4H Shooting Sports event starts April 25 in Pierre. Our shooters are competing in BB Gun, Sporter Air Rifle, Air pistol, .22 Pistol, .22 Rifle, and Archery. There is also a CMP match for both Sporter Air Rifle and Precision Air Rifle. This will be the final event for many shooters. Our national BB gun team will compete in Rodgers, Arkansas, in July. The last two months have had a BB Gun match almost every weekend. Four Precision shooters competed in Junior Olympics with two competing in small bore (.22) and two in Precision Air Rifle and one in Air Pistol. As you can see, the new complex has added many shooters and events to our team.

**CHASE THE ACE** is up to almost \$29,000 with only 11 cards left. One person earned \$527 for trying to draw the Ace. The time has increased from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. every Sunday afternoon at Humboldt Bar, until someone draws the Ace.

## Legionnaire Insurance Trust

### *Free Coverage*

Members of the LEGION FAMILY (Legionnaires, Auxiliary, Sons of Legion) who are 18 and older are eligible for free insurance from the Legionnaire Insurance Trust. This \$1,000/\$5,000 accidental death policy pays if you are injured or killed while on Legion business. (Carry a membership application with you at all times.) If you are not sure if you are signed up, or would like to register, call 1-800-235-6943 and have your membership number available. It only takes a few minutes. They will not keep calling you. The website is <https://www.thelit.com>.

## LEGION RIDERS *Lamar Nance, Chairman*

May is Motorcycle Awareness Month - Put your phones down, already.

Regina Cobb was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of her many years as Membership Chair for the Riders. The Legion Riders welcomed new member Rebecca Barber. Rich and Lynn from the Madison SD Legion Riders were present.

Upcoming Events:

May 3: Brandon Loyalty Day Parade. Meet at Post home North Parking Lot at 11:45, KSU at 12:00. Line up at Brandon Valley High School. Parade starts at 1 p.m.

May 5: Midwest Honor Flight – Details to be announced.

May 19: Midwest Honor Flight – Details to be announced.

May 26: Thunder on the Missouri in Sioux City. Meet at Post home 10:45, KSU 11:00. Gas stop at Exit 2 on I29.

Ride to Sgt. Bluff American Legion, 901 Topaz Drive. Line up 12:00 - 1:45 p.m. Ride starts at 2 p.m.

Jun 2: Midwest Honor Flight – Details to be announced.

Jun 9: Brookings Wall escort. From Dacotah Bank Center to Soccer Fields in Brookings.

Our meetings are the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Post home. Anyone who rides a motorcycle and is a member of the Legion, Legion Auxiliary, or Sons of the Legion is invited to be a guest and join. Check our website at <http://siouxfallslegionriders.yolasite.com/>.

**Quote of the Month:** "Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future." - John F. Kennedy

## New Post 15 Members

We welcome our newest members to Post 15 and invite you to attend our membership activities:

Todd Katzenberger, James Bernard, Thomas Frost, Greg Buthe, Bobby, Smith, Jason Wilson, Glenn Nelson, and Gary Skinlo



Ed Hruska waiting to play Taps for retired Air Force veteran and Post 15 member Chris Thesenvitz at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery. March 23, 2026. Al Arndt photo.

*Uniform caps available in the office  
\$70 (hat & pheasant)*

*Wear your cap to membership meetings and events to let others know of your service and membership.*



Post 15 Commander Patrick Branco acknowledging past commander Larry Panning for 55 years of membership in the American Legion. With Department Commander Kevin Hempel, Post 15 1st Vice Commander Dick Moss, Post 15 Adjutant John Bachmeier, Post 15 Chaplain Donna Puthoff, and emcee Jon Theel. Legion birthday party on March 21, 2026. Photo by Al Arndt.

## CHORUS NOTES *Len Neugebauer*

On April 2 the Singing Legionnaires sang the national anthem and other patriotic songs at the Dakota District Change of Command held at the Military Heritage Alliance. They are scheduled to sing the national anthem on May 2 at the Howard Wood Relays. The chorus continues to rehearse on Monday nights at 7 p.m. Anyone who may be interested in singing with our men's chorus or who has questions regarding chorus activities is encouraged to contact chorus president Bruce Naasz at 605-310-6210 or by email at [66cyclor2019@gmail.com](mailto:66cyclor2019@gmail.com). The chorus will resume its Avenue of Flags program by posting American flags on May 16 Armed Forces Day and May 25 Memorial Day. Individual sponsorships are available for posting flags along downtown Phillips Avenue. If you or someone you know would like to sponsor a flag, perhaps in honor of a loved one, please contact Todd Schmidt or Bruce Naasz. Also, contact Todd Schmidt at 605-370-4405 if you know of any Sioux Falls businesses that might like to participate in this flag program.

## VAVS *Chris Fischer*

Larry Panning and I attended the quarterly VAVS committee meeting in the VA Hospital meeting room. The executive staff provided comments regarding the upcoming launch of the Electronic Health Record system, new Boiler Plant, updating HVAC for patient rooms, and the new Sterile Processing unit. Quarterly monetary and non-monetary donations were reviewed. Current needs list was presented and discussed. There continues to be a need for non-drawstring sweatpants, deodorants, paper products, and gift cards for restaurants, barber shops, or any other approved activities for CLC inpatients. No longer accepting toothbrushes, toothpaste, or bar soap. Volunteers are desperately needed as drivers, wheelchair escorts, front desk and front lobby assistants. The VA-2K walk for Homeless Veterans on May 20 is open to all. The Show and Shine Car Show will be held August 12. The VA will be requesting volunteer help for flag setup and take down on Memorial Day.

Summer picnics with the CLC Vets will be held May - September. Post 15 has been assigned three dates: June 17, July 15, and August 19. Ten volunteers per day are being requested to push veterans from their rooms to the picnic area outside. Sign up with Sue by the Monday before.

## HONOR GUARD COMMANDER

### *Bill Peters*

There is something powerful—something deeply meaningful—about standing at attention as a fellow veteran is laid to rest. It's a moment that reminds us why the American Legion exists... and why our Honor Guard matters. The Honor Guard is not just a ceremonial unit. It is a **final promise kept**.

We are there when a family needs us most—To render military honors...To stand in silent respect...and to ensure no veteran is forgotten.

Every time we step forward in uniform, we represent something bigger than ourselves:

- **Respect** for those who served
- **Honor** for a life given in service
- **Tradition** that connects generations of veterans
- **Support** for families. For many families, those few minutes at the graveside stay with them forever.

**A HEARTFELT THANK YOU** to our Honor Guard members—

You are the definition of volunteerism.

You give your time.

You answer the call—often on short notice.

You stand in the heat, the cold, the wind... without hesitation.

You don't do it for recognition.

You do it because it's the right thing to do.

Because of you, we continue to provide the dignity and respect that every veteran has earned.

### **AN INVITATION TO SERVE AGAIN**

If you've ever thought about getting more involved...

If you're looking for a way to make a difference...

If you want to reconnect with the purpose of service...

**The Honor Guard is waiting for you.**

You don't need experience. You don't need perfection. We will train you. Uniforms are provided. You will be part of a team that truly matters. Some of our members will tell you—Joining the Honor Guard was the moment they felt connected again.

### **CLOSING THOUGHT**

This is who we are. This is what we do. We honor the past...We serve in the present...And we carry forward a tradition that must never fade.

**If not us... then who?** Step forward. Join the Honor Guard. Be part of something that truly matters.

**TEAM: Together Everyone Accomplishes More.**

## Medicare Give Back Benefit Plan

As an aircraft maintenance officer, I've always believed in preventive maintenance over corrective maintenance. That applies to health care, also. It bothers me when insurance companies refuse to pay for tests that might help prevent health issues but are willing to disburse big bucks once disease or injury occurs.

So I was thrilled to be introduced two years ago to an insurance program that operates with a preventive maintenance philosophy. Tamara Solum (<https://soluminsurance.com/>) described the Veterans Medicare Give Back Benefit plan, which is offered to Medicare-eligible military veterans at no cost. Humana, the supporting insurance company, offered a monthly \$100 rebate for Medicare Part B, an online pharmacy with \$60 in credits per quarter, and numerous other benefits. Tamara explained that many veterans don't take care of themselves, perhaps due to lack of money or transportation. Having these free items delivered to their homes increases the likelihood of self-care. The plan included two weeks of free meal delivery immediately following hospitalization, because those who live alone might not eat properly when they get home. Free gym memberships and other perks were included to encourage veterans to exercise and socialize.

United Healthcare has taken over the benefit plan from Humana. The quarterly allowance increased to \$65, with additional credits added for daily exercise, health care check-ups, and social events—all with the goal of encouraging a healthy lifestyle. There is also an app that allows you to spend these credits at a local store instead of through mail order.

My reason for publicizing this program, in addition to helping my fellow veterans, is to show insurance companies that people want this service. Prevention is less costly than healing and offers a better quality of life. Tamara (605-496-8946) can tell you about the other benefits of the plan and cover the insurance aspects. For me, it's enough to have my SSA deposit increase by \$1,200 per year and have \$260-\$400 in healthcare aids delivered free to my door. —Diane Diekman



Approximately 40 families attended the baby shower at the VA hospital on April 18. Post 15 donated Amazon gift cards. Photo by Sue Peters.



### NEW RATES FOR PAID UP FOR LIFE (PUFL) MEMBERSHIP

AGE 24 & under	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85 & over
\$2,007	\$1,924	\$1,834	\$1,736	\$1,630	\$1,515	\$1,390	\$1,254	\$1,113	\$972	\$835	\$701	\$579	\$494

Members can renew at the Post 15 office or online. Choose the PUFL option with 12 equal payments or one lump sum: <https://mylegion.org/PersonifyEbusiness/Membership/Renew#legion-org>. For more information, contact Post 15 at 605-336-3470.

#### 2026 DUES

Paying now saves \$\$\$\$. Starting in July, National mails a reminder each month until dues are paid. When we pay early, no more notices have to be printed and mailed.

### Battleship South Dakota Memorial



Museum opens for the summer on May 1

12th St & Kiwanis Ave

[www.facebook.com/bb57memorial](http://www.facebook.com/bb57memorial)

[info@southdakotabattleship.org](mailto:info@southdakotabattleship.org)

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### Fly A Flag In Honor Of Loved Ones—The Post 15

Chorus is offering to fly your flag along Phillips Ave during 8 holidays for a \$44 donation. Call the Legion office for details.

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### SINGING LEGIONNAIRES

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The South Dakota American Legion College brought together Legionnaires from across the state for leadership, learning, and renewed commitment to serving veterans, youth, and community. The ten graduates were: Scott Cooper and Bruce Babcock, Groton Post 39; Diane Diekman, Clear Lake Post 49; Mike Kraft, Britton Post 80; Regan "Trip" McClurkin, Piedmont Post 311; Jon McDonald and Jon Sinclair, Box Elder Post 315; Richard Moss, Sioux Falls Post 15; Keith Schultz and Mike Steffan, Spearfish Post 164. April 19, 2026. American Legion Department of South Dakota photo.

Post 15 was recognized as Group Honoree at the Helpline Center's annual Spirit of Volunteerism breakfast. Nominated by Avera Hospital for packing food bags each Tuesday. April 8, 2026. Al Arndt photo collection.

**OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF SIOUX FALLS POST 15 AMERICAN LEGION**

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**OFFICERS OF SIOUX FALLS POST 15**

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**1st Vice Commander** Dick Moss  
**2nd Vice Commander** Mark Parsley  
**Finance Officer** Jim Cero  
**Historian** vacant  
**Sergeant-At-Arms** Jim Puthoff  
**Chaplain** Donna Puthoff  
**Adjutant** John Bachmeier  
**Post Service Officer** Fred Ahrens

**OFFICERS OF AUXILIARY Unit 15**

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**2nd Vice President** Vicki Branco  
**Treasurer** Kathy Dathe  
**Historian** vacant  
**Sergeant-At-Arms** Nancy Renner  
**Chaplain** Kasey Jacobson  
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**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**— Dale Hill, Immediate Past Commander  
Patrick Branco—Chair  
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Steve Rueschhoff, Al Arndt, Randy Miller, Caitlyn VanDam

**Past President** Kellie Heazlett  
**Executive Board** Judy Hill  
**Executive Board** Roxann Zenobi  
**Executive Board** Pat Micko

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Membership: Patrick Branco  
VSO - John Bachmeier  
Vets Council: Jonathan Theel

Americanism: Martina Goergen  
Baseball: Randy Miller  
VAVS: Chris Fischer  
Memorial Day Flags: Ron Lien

Youth Trooper: Dave Rowe  
Honor Guard Commander: Bill Peters  
Pancakes: Dale Haas

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