

POST 121 NEWSLETTER

THE AMERICAN LEGION: VETERANS STRENGTHENING AMERICA

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SOCIAL MEDIA HANDOFF

BY BILL GNATZIG

When Kari Healy, our Social Media Specialist, announced that she would be deploying (ultimate destination Iraq) early in '22, it set us scrambling to figure out how we would fill the sizeable void she would be leaving on our Public Affairs team.

Effectively using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, etc., is a critical

element in communicating with both members and the community at large, and Kari was a true pro with a winning attitude and quick smile.

With crossed fingers, we sent out an email blast looking for someone to step forward and almost immediately had a reply from Nick Kaufenberg, another of our younger members. He

has now agreed to fill that role on our team, bringing with him a depth of experience in in social media marketing. Nick is on full time active reserve duty with the 96th Airlift squadron in Minneapolis.

Thank you, Kari, for all you have done, and thank you Nick for stepping forward!



LOOKING AHEAD

In this newsletter you will find a copy of our 2021 Year in Review giving just a glimpse of what we were able to accomplish as a post in the past year.

It is not without the dedication and countless volunteer hours of many post members that each of the listed items and so many more are achieved each year by Post 121. The American Legion's motto is: "Veterans Strengthening America". As Commander, I am exceptionally proud of what our post has accomplished throughout two very challenging years of a pandemic. Our membership has proven that nothing can hold us back from our continued service to our post, our community and our country.

As veterans we all "Answered the Call"

to serve our country, each in our own way (drafted or enlisted), we all "Stepped Forward" to serve. Now more than ever as veterans we need to "Step Forward" again, to advocate for upholding and defending the United States Constitution, equal justice and opportunity for everyone and discrimination against no one, youth education, responsible citizenship and honoring military service by observing and participating in memorial events. To mentor and lead new generations of Americans. And to honor those that came before us by paying respect for all past military sacrifices to ensure that they are not forgotten by future generations.

Please review our Year in Review, be proud to be a member of Post 121, veterans dedicated to Strengthening America right here in our community.

As we move forward into 2022 there

is room for us to continue growing, many opportunities to "Step Forward" and provide programs and community events that are family friendly while supporting local youth organizations, our surrounding communities and our fellow veterans and their families. I look forward to each of you being a part of our journey for 2022.

“

**Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much.**

— HELEN KELLER

As always, thank you for your service and thank you for being a member of Post 121.

Melissa (Missy) Hildebrandt
Commander

A Year in Review 2021

AMERICAN LEGION POST 121

The ability to adapt to challenges is ingrained in those who have served in the military. Despite continuing Covid interference during 2021, River Falls American Legion Post 121 was able to build on its history of serving veterans, youth, and the broader community. The year's accomplishments included:

- Providing Honor Guard military rites at 31 veteran funerals
- Placing flags and presenting Memorial Day colors, rifle salutes, and taps at area cemeteries, followed by hosting a Memorial Day community program at the Veteran's Memorial
- Presenting Veterans Day colors, rifle salutes, and taps at all local schools
- Honoring & celebrating 100th Birthdays for two post members
- Delivered fruit baskets to "shut-in" veterans on Veterans Day
- Providing virtual Post meeting options for those unable to attend in person
- Conducting official flag retirement ceremony for River Falls Community
- Distributing more than \$30,000 to causes that include veteran in need and their families; scholarships; school and youth programs; funds to allow needy youth to participate in extracurricular activities; the school backpack program; Big Brother/Sisters; Christmas gifts for four veteran families; and more
- Presenting school medal awards to four students; sponsoring Legion junior and senior baseball teams and a local cub scout pack
- Developing and implementing a Leadership & Character Development program at Meyer Middle School
- Holding a community care package drive for deployed troops
- Sponsoring three blood drives that collected 472 units of blood from 439 donors
- Lending medical equipment to those in need
- Sponsoring a special community breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus
- Providing facility space for community and veteran group events
- Attaining an all-time high in membership for the sixth year in a row!

These achievements would not have been possible without the unwavering dedication and support from Post 121 members and friends. **Thank you all!**

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



March 4th, 2022 - Bingo - 7PM
March 5th, 2022 - RF Trap
 Chicken Fry - 4PM - 7PM
March 9th, 2022 - Post Meeting
 Meal - 6PM - Meeting - 7PM
March 18th, 2022 - Blngo - 7PM
March 19th, 2022 - Post Awards
 & Recognition Banquet - 5PM
March 23rd, 2022 - Post
 Meeting Meeting - 7PM
April 1st, 2022 - Bingo - 7PM

April 2nd, 2022 - Baseball
 Chicken Fry - 4PM - 7PM
April 13th, 2022 - Post Meeting
 Meeting - 7PM
April 15th, 2022 - Bingo - 7PM
April 22 -23rd, 2022 - Bluegrass
 Bourbon & Brews Festival
April 27th, 2022 - Post Meeting
 Meeting - 7PM
May 6th, 2022 - Bingo - 7PM

May 11th, 2022 - Post Meeting -
 Meeting - 7PM
May 20th, 2022 - Bingo - 7PM
May 25th, 2022 - Post Meeting
 Meeting - 7PM
May 30th, 2022 - Memorial Day
June 12th, 2022 - Post 121 Golf
 Tournament
July 8-10th, 2022 - River Falls
 Days - Parade - BBQ & Bean
 Bag Tournament

POST 121 APPAREL

HOODED SWEATSHIRTS - \$25
 T-SHIRTS - \$15



STOP BY AND GET YOUR GEAR!

ADJUTANT'S REPORT

ADJUTANT JIM MILLER

A personal highlight for the past 6 months was being able to attend virtually the induction of Derrick Schmidt into the MN Air National Guard's newly established Flight of Honor. He was one of nine, and the only NCO Air Guard member inducted; two were Generals. A very distinct honor for one of our own.

Don Matzek's 100th Birthday recognition in November was clearly a second highlight for the Post. Member Arnold Roen also recently celebrated his 101st Birthday. We now have two 100-year-old members.

By September Covid diminished enough so that WelHaven resumed their monthly veteran luncheon and invited one post member to attend. We use that time to keep veterans living there updated on Post activities.

With the invaluable help of Post member, retired Judge Joe Boles, we are moving very close to the adoption of an agreement with the Veterans Memorial governing group which will incorporate that beautiful memorial into the Post for ongoing management and oversight. In doing so, we thank Neil Anderson for all he has done over the years to develop and support the memorial. Neil will continue to be deeply involved with the memorial.

The Post was able to provide \$3,600 to 4 veteran families with a total of six children as part of the community Christmas gifting program. That effort was primarily funded by the \$100 from 100 fundraiser this past year.

Thank you to all those who participate.



Bingo REPORT

JIM MILLER

Bingo restarted in September. Off to a slow start but picked up and topped out on January 22 with 207 players. Through those eight sessions we averaged 100 players per session. The Jackpot reached \$4,323 and was won by a local lady on January 22.

Meat raffles are also held when we know the expected crowd will warrant. Believe me, the meats are prime plus, and a nice little fundraiser in and of itself.

You can now sign up to help with Bingo online. Same system used for Christmas Tree sales. (Thank You Bret VanBlaircom and Jeff Rusinco). Drop an email to the Post at: americanlegionpost121@yahoo.com if you would like to pitch in and help; we'll help you access the system. Our biggest need is for CALLERS. Don't worry, we will train you. Also, we welcome help from nonmembers (family members etc.). Also, COME AND PLAY, an important fund raiser for the Post.





"And I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free. And I won't forget the men who died who gave that right to me."

LEE GREENWOOD

PROMOTING PATRIOTISM

Third Vice Bret VanBlaircom

Our fundraising efforts have always produced one thing, funding for our missions and opportunities for veterans who are in need of help. We have recently been offered, and accepted, the offer to take over the Flag Program fundraiser from the Optimist Club (see adjoining sidebar). This provides an excellent chance for new individuals to step forward and help alongside our "seasoned" volunteers.

While we have a dedicated corps of regular volunteers, that group is only about 10% of our Post membership. To continue to grow our mission of serving others, we need "new blood" to step forward with donations of time and ideas for our fundraising projects.

As you read through the list of what Post 121 did in 2021 in our Year in Review. Imagine how

much more we can do in 2022 with new input, ideas and the helping hands of more post members and their families.

We accomplish a lot but consider what it would look like if another 10% of our membership were energized to participate and help. Yes, volunteerism requires effort, and carving out time isn't always easy, but it can be hugely rewarding for both those who volunteer and those who are being served.

"True Americanism is an ideology that is continually nurtured within one's soul through individual daily actions, thoughts and beliefs in what their responsibilities are to be, blessed to live in one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all."

Are you interested in promoting patriotism in our community?

Have you noticed as you drive through River Falls on various holidays the beauty of streets lined with the red, white and blue proudly flying?

That beautiful display of patriotism in our community for the past ten years is part of the RF Optimist Club Flag Program.

Our post has been given the honor of carrying on that wonderful program and fundraiser for years to come. To be able to carry on this program we need your help.

While details are still being worked out as we transition responsibilities from one organization to another.

Watch for more information to come soon.

What we do know is that the program currently has over 200+ subscribers. This means that we need volunteers, friends and family willing to help put out and retrieve flags on designated holidays. Who is willing to help us out and proudly be a part of this patriotic program for our community?

HELP NEEDED



CHICKEN FRY

1st Vice Larry Larson

Our Chicken fry season is upon us. This season we will only have four frys. Our first fry was for the Wildcat Trap Team. The RF Trap Team donate all proceeds from that fry back to our Honor Guard to help defray the cost of uniforms. Our next fry will be for the Boy Scouts on February 12th. The Boy Scouts use the proceeds this fundraiser for operating costs and supporting Scouts on their trips. The next fry will on March 5th for the Wildcat Trap Team again. They will use the proceeds from this fry for supporting all kids that want to learn trap shooting. And our last fry will be on April 2nd for the Post 121 Legion Baseball team.

If you haven't been to one of our chicken frys, please stop by. It is an excellent meal.

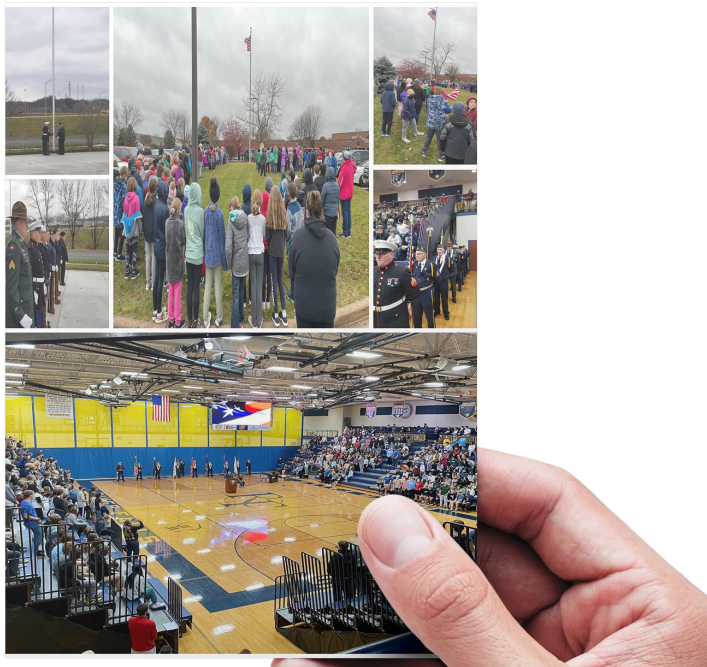
You can order take-out, or you can dine-in with your family and enjoy the conversation.

As with any activity, it takes volunteers to make it happen. These chicken frys are a major source of income for the Post. We use these funds to support our local Veterans and their kids.

Your Post is in need of volunteers to train how to be fryers and cooks. Absolutely no experience needed, we will train you. It takes 2 fryers and 2 cooks for each fry. We are currently down to 3 fryers and 1 cook.

If you would consider one of these positions, please contact me at larrylarson103@gmail.com or by phone at (715)410-7937.

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." – Gandhi



HONOR GUARD

by Mel Hoffman

2021 saw your Honor Guard conduct Military Honors for thirty-one (31) Veterans near (River Falls) and far (Spooner). In addition, Post 121 Honor Guard conducted Memorial Day ceremonies at multiple local cemeteries, presented the Colors for Meyer Middle School Awards assembly, River Falls Tractor Pull, Pierce County Fair, and Tattersall Distillery. We conducted a formal Flag Retirement Ceremony at the Post; Fired salutes for two 100th birthday boys - Arnie Roen and Don Matzek as well as performed Celebration of Life Salute for Jerry Carter.

In recognition of Veterans Day, we conducted Military Honors at seven (7) local schools, presented Colors at Meyer Middle School and delivered forty-two fruit baskets to Post Veterans.

We heartily welcome new members Joe Fusilier and Troy Singletary to the Team. Interested in becoming a member of the Honor Guard? Contact Mel Hoffman at sgmmhoffman@gmail.com



AWARDS & RECOGNITION BANQUET

2nd Vice Mel Hoffman

After 2 years of not being able to host an awards banquet and recognize the many amazing individuals within our post and throughout the community that selflessly supported Post 121 and veterans in our community, we are excited to be planning our Annual Post 121 Award and Recognition Banquet for 2021.

**Post 121 Awards Ceremony
Saturday, March 19th, 2022**

Social Hour 5:00 - 6:00pm

Dinner 6:00 - 7:00pm

Awards 7:00 - 9:00pm

Tickets \$20

Excellent opportunity to recognize our deserving comrades and experience a special camaraderie.

Program Report

2nd Vice Mel Hoffman

Two Special Programs are being considered for 2022:

Community Picnic

Food, Music & Activities for Kids & Adults

Day Trip to WI Veterans Memorial

Anyone having any Program ideas that supports the American Legions Four Pillars, please contact me at sgmhoffman@gmail.com



**VALOR
SERVICE
PATRIOT
HERO
SACRIFICE
COURAGE
HONOR**

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

1st Vice Larry Larson

Welcome Comrades!

I want to personally thank you for being a member of Post 121. We are not the largest Post in the State of Wisconsin, but we are recognized as one of the best. Your Post is involved in several activities that support our Veterans and our children. But, as a Post we can always do better. We need to expand our activities to include spouse's and kids. In that respect, we could use any and all suggestions you may have.

The Membership Committee has the task of putting these ideas together. We could certainly use your talents here. Please contact me at larrylarson103@gmail.com or by phone at 715-410-7937.

In the past few months, we have experienced the unexpected loss of two very dedicated members of Post 121. Larry Cicchese served as the Finance Officer for the Post for many years and David Reese was a dedicated member of the Post Honor Guard and integral part of the Public Affairs team. Both of these losses left big shoes to be filled and large holes of responsibility in Post operations.

We have been blessed with individuals willing and quickly stepping in to help fill these important roles. We welcome Byron Dopkins as our Accountant, Gordie Heis as our Finance Officer and Nick Kaufenberg taking over our social media posts.

Thank you all for stepping up and answering the call to serve.

"Some people live an entire lifetime and wonder if they have ever made a difference in the world. A veteran does not have that problem."
RONALD REAGAN



Auxiliary REPORT

Greetings and welcome all new members. Where has the time gone, soon the daffodils will be pushing up thru the snow!

Our first "Breakfast with Santa" was a success, but next year we'll surely have more sausages and French toast sticks. Thank you to all who helped make this possible, especially our great Legion pancake flippers! Bingo has started and the canteen is thriving. Thank you again to all the amazing volunteers who show-up every time to help and the great selection of goodies we serve!

Please make sure to get your membership dues in for 2022. If you have not paid yet, you should have received a 2nd notice from National. Wouldn't it be nice to surpass the Legion/Post in membership? Come on wives, sign up for the Auxiliary to honor that special Veteran in your life. If you have children, sons can be "Sons of the American Legion", and daughters can become "Junior Auxiliary" members.

Questions, or applications, please contact: Jeanne Williams - (612) 532-7248 or Margaret Larson - (715) 410-7936.

It's that time again for year-end-reports! This is where I total all volunteer hours for each program you worked on. Examples: flying the flag (Americanism) caring for a Veteran (Service to our Veterans) donating to the Food Pantry (Community Service) Please take a minute and write down your volunteer hours and send them to me. I will determine which program they go under.

Events coming up: 2022 Spring Conference: April 2-3, Eau Claire - more info. Forthcoming

Until next time, stay positive, healthy and safe!

Margaret Larson
Unit 121 Auxiliary President
maggiedoit@hotmail.com



"The willingness of America's veterans to sacrifice for our country has earned them our lasting gratitude."

JEFF MILLER

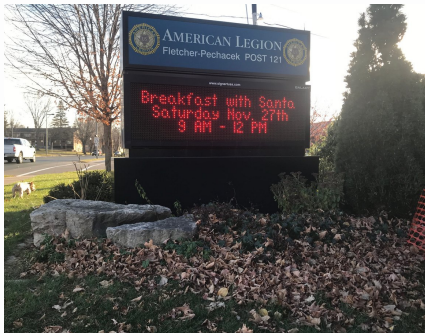
POST 121 EVENTS

and volunteer opportunities



CONCERTS & EVENTS

By the time you receive this newsletter we will just have hosted the Memories Music and Comedy show at the Post. This will be our second show held at Post 121 and has proven to be a great opportunity to provide fun entertainment for our members and the community. What show would you like to see next?



PUBLIC AFFAIRS

We unexpectedly lost a member of our Public Affairs team with the recent death of David Reese, who for the last several years has been responsible for posting the electronic messages that update those driving by the Post. We've temporarily covered his responsibilities but will be looking for someone to take over that role. Let Bill Gnatzig - gnatzig@dishup.us or the Commander - stillservingpost121@gmail.com know if you are interested.



BINGO

Bingo has been a long-standing fundraiser of Post 121 and continues to be a family friendly event. Bingo sessions run the 1st and 3rd Friday of every month (Sep.-May). Bingo workers are NEEDED to keep this event going. Let us know if you are able to share a few hours on a Friday evening to help us out.



BLUEGRASS, BOURBON & BREWS FESTIVAL

Working with the River Falls Chamber of Commerce, Post 121 will be serving as one of the anchor sites for the 2022 Bluegrass, Bourbon & Brews Festival. We will be featuring live bands the evening of Friday, April 22, and throughout the day on Saturday, the 23rd.

More information on specific scheduling, volunteer needs, etc., will be forthcoming as planning progresses.



POST WEBSITE

Do you enjoy being creative and finding ways to effectively communicate and share the many amazing things that Post 121 does in our community. We are looking for someone or a group of individuals that would be interested in updating and maintaining our post website. If this is something that may interest you. Let us know.



GUN RAFFLES

Post member Ray Curtis along with the help from member Craig Rogazcewski of C&R Guns have been instrumental in implementing our most recent Gun Raffle Fundraiser. To date 3 raffles have been completed all with local winners. New raffles will be starting soon at Johnnies and at Emma's.

Stop by and support local businesses and buy a square or two for your chance to win and support the Post at the same time.

HELP US BRAINSTORM

Bill Gnatzig

On Saturday, March 12th, the Post will be holding a special brainstorming session to help identify challenges and opportunities, discuss things we do well and things we could be doing better, wrestle with limitations and priorities, and more. The wide-ranging, yet structured, "group think" process will provide the basis for both long term strategic planning and marketing/communications programs. RF School District administrator Jamie Benson has agreed to serve as an outside facilitator. We're looking forward to a fun and productive day. Watch for more details, but in the meantime dust off your thinking cap and polish your long-term vision glasses.

BLOOD DRIVE UPDATE

Pat Singel

Due to staffing shortages the Red Cross has had to cancel Friday March 11th of the upcoming Blood Drive. With this change the March Blood Drive will be Thursday March 10th from 1:00pm - 7:00pm.

Appointments: Call Judy 715-760-1144
or through the Red Cross at: redcrossblood.org
enter code: riverfallswi



AMERICAN LEGION POST 121
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RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

