

2020 In review (Newsletter)

**Commander comments:** While 2020 is ending, I can only say that millions of Americans, along with the entire world, are looking to put this chapter of our lives behind us. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on millions of lives and continues to ravage every corner of the world, as we wait for a vaccine to hopefully end the spread of this horrific virus.

At American Legion Post 22, we will always work to strengthen America by improving the lives of veterans and their families, fighting for an effective system of defense, building community pride in our national identity, and giving young people a foundation for future success.

Like every year, we plan to participate in “Buddy Checks”. These checks are particularly important this year with our fellow veterans being quarantined. If anyone knows of a veteran who may need assistance, please notify the Executive Committee.

I wish all of you a safe and healthy holiday season. Please remember those veterans who are deployed and protecting our freedoms. “God Bless”

**From the Adjutant:** Greetings! I hope all of you are happy and healthy. What can one really say about the year 2020? Probably the kindest would be that it has been “interesting”. The year started out normally, then quickly dropped off a cliff of “weirdness”. In early March, the Corona Virus was declared a pandemic and Post 22 was forced to close for business for nearly 2 months. This was a huge blow to our employees and their families. It was also a serious blow to our finances and the money the business raises for our Legion programs. Fortunately, the Executive Committee’s (EC) financial conservatism (growing a capital improvement savings account), a laser focus on good business practices and planning for the future, helped us survive the crisis. What follows is a month-by-month rundown of the “highlights” and occasionally “lowlights” from the perspective of the Adjutant.

**(January)** We upgraded lighting in the Bar area: Installed multi-colored LED rope lights (Tolsma/Van Delist/Harris). Upgraded small spotlights above bar area with dimmable LED bulbs to save electrical costs (Tom Smith).

Bid for 2024 State Convention was put in by Post 22. Chaplain Fuller was the project officer for this. The Post selected will be announced at the Mid-Winter conference in Oacoma, SD in February. Post 9 of Pierre was eventually selected.

The membership approved two (2) different fundraisers to help us raise money to fix the roof. “Chase the Queen” and the “Gun Board Raffle” were both approved and were scheduled to begin by the end of the month.

**(February)** We continued electrical upgrades (Tom Smith and Adjutant Harris) in “Dart Room” with the install of overhead LED lights to replace older fluorescent lighting. We repaired/replaced lighting in the bathrooms and storage/utility closets. Planning began on upgrading the bathrooms.

Several Post Officers attended SD American Legion Midwinter Conference and provided training briefings (Harris and Fuller) to members statewide. Adjutant Harris (Department Americanism Chairman) hosted the 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual High School Oratorical Contest. The Post began a gun raffle and Queen of Hearts raffles to help raise money for our “replace the roof (or at least stem the leaks)” project.

Post 22 EC approves donations to be presented at the Midwinter conference: “Popcorn Fund” or **Veteran Affairs Volunteer Services (VAVS)** in the amount of **\$250**; **Children and Youth** in the amount of **\$300**. Adjutant Harris presented these checks during the conference. They also worked out the details of proposed scholarships for our Boys State attendees, and the winner of our Post Oratorical Contest.

**(March)** Prior to the forced closing, in early March, Adjutant Harris, EC member Tom Smith (licensed electrician and all-around facility genius) and 30-year Legion member Tom Grigsby (Master Tiler) planned and completed a bathroom upgrade: 1) replacing the battered/smelly linoleum floors with beautiful new tile; 2) upgraded/repaired plumbing fixtures where needed; 3) cleaned/repaired stall dividers and 4) painted the walls. The project took 15+ days and the results were beautiful/clean bathrooms.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March we held a **Post Everlasting Ceremony** to honor those members who passed away over the last year. As always, this was planned and executed by our Chaplain, Don Fuller. Thank you, Don and all those who helped for your hard work. We expect this to be an annual event. District meetings were canceled, and all current District/Department officers were asked to remain in their positions until further notice.

**(April-May)** In mid-April, several members of Post leadership saw the closed facility as an “opportunity” to take on some long overdue facility upgrades. Commander Tolsma, Vice Commander Van Delist, Adjutant Harris, Chaplain Fuller and AL Auxiliary member/officer Toni Fuller worked for nearly a month to remove our old, smoke stained/abused ceiling tiles. They cleaned and painted all the ceiling tile crossbars, HVAC vents and return air covers, and installed bright, shiny new tiles. Insulation was added/replaced where necessary and ceiling lights were cleaned and upgraded to improve efficiency and save energy.

New chair rails were installed in the lounge (in those locations that did not currently have rails), drywall was repaired/spot painted throughout, and carpets cleaned. Efforts were made to de-clutter the entire facility. Other small projects were undertaken by Post 22 Riders John Fleming Sr. and Jr., (removal of an old brick room divider in the dart room) and EC member Fink (carpet patching in the dart room). Commander Tolsma repaired/replaced the door lighting in the beer cooler which really brightened up the bar. He also purchased and installed new cabinets/countertop for our (also new) popcorn popper. Post 22 member, Shane Lee and our youngest (by far) SAL member Dylan Mollman, also volunteered many hours during these projects.

Prior to reopening the lounge, Manager Jeremy Snyder and Assistant Manager Debbie Weige, pulled out their gloves and cleaning supplies to deep clean/sanitize all areas/equipment/beer coolers/kitchen etc. When our members/patrons returned in Mid-May, they were stunned and pleased by the improvements.

In late May, we were finally able to hold a membership meeting and took care of some important business. Our (delayed by one month) annual meeting was held and Post Officers were elected. These officers were installed by Department Commander Fred Nelson via a Zoom conference, which was viewed on our new 70-inch High-Definition TV. We also reviewed, updated, and approved changes to our Post Constitution and Bylaws. These are posted on our website and can be viewed by following this link: <https://www.alpost22rcsd.com/mtg-minutes-etc>.

**(June)** was spent wrapping up the 2020 membership year business. We finished the year at about 91% of our goal. Chris Van Delist was selected as the **District 2 Legionnaire of the Year for 2019-2020**. His nomination was forwarded to Department to compete at that level.

The EC decided to get rid of our last outdoor shed because people kept breaking into it. Vice Commander Van Delist and SAL member Dylan Mollman, renovated storage areas within the facility to make room for the contents of the shed. Several months prior to this, an older shed was irreparably damaged after someone broke into it and then decided to make a campfire on the wooden floor. Not surprisingly, the fire spread and destroyed the contents of the shed, as well as damaging the nearby dumpster, which the culprits also started on fire.

2020 **Boys State and Youth Trooper Academy** sessions were cancelled due to the Corona Virus. This was not only a big “hit” to the young men and women who attend these programs, it also affected the five (5) Post 22 members who are on the staff of SD Boys State. Vice Commander Chris Van Delist is the Director of SD Boys State. Other staff members are: Georgeann Van Delist (Admin), and City Counselors Doug Harris, Joe Aldentaler and Anson Juelfs.

**Post 22 Baseball:** Commander Tolsma announced that the Rapid City Council voted to award 5 million dollars to the Fitzgerald Stadium rebuilding project and picked a contractor to start tearing the facility down in mid-July. He reported that the team management still needs to raise another \$300K for the project. He also submitted an application/bid to get the 2021 and 2022 American Legion Baseball National Regional tournaments at Rapid City. We were unable to set up our fund-raising Beer Garden tent during the firecracker tournament this summer due to city permit restrictions. This of course adversely affected our ability to give money to the team.

**(July)** The new membership year began with the usual landslide of renewals. Thanks to all of you who renew early and have done so for many years. We reached nearly 50% of our goal by the end of the month. The Riders have completed numerous escort missions this summer and have enjoyed several fun rides for the members.

In line with many other 2020 disasters, the HVAC unit above the bar area went on permanent vacation during the hottest part of the summer. Management and officers were forced to “overcome” by pushing the cool air from the A/C units in the old building up to the bar using multiple industrial size fans. Our members/patrons likened it to “trying to enjoy a beer in a wind tunnel”. Due to delivery delays, the new unit was not installed until the Friday of Labor Day weekend (just in time for our first snow).

**Tee It Up for the Troops golf tournament/fundraiser:** Chairman/Organizer and Post 22 member, Joey Franze put together a phenomenally successful 2<sup>nd</sup> annual event. Post 22 was an official “Event Sponsor”. We donated \$300 to sponsor a tee box and had a member foursome playing. The local chapter of the “Dogs for Vets” was one of the recipients of the monies raised at the event. Post 22 member, Becky Flanigan, is the founder and director of this organization

Post 22 accepted a blood drive challenge from Post 315 in Box Elder this month. Members were encouraged to give the gift of life. In early August, we were notified by Vitalant Blood Services that Post 22 had donated more units of blood than Post 315. Thanks to all of you who “gave till it hurt”. The rules on who can donate have changed this year, so if you were previously ineligible you might want to consider checking it out. <https://www.vitalant.org/>

**(August)** Finally, a month to slow things down a bit (project wise anyway). Membership renewals continued to come in at a rapid pace and kept our membership officer busy. It was also a time to properly recognize those members who have been loyal to The American Legion and Post 22 for many years. Membership Officer Harris contacted many members to offer them longevity cap pins. We recognized multiple members during our monthly meeting with pins for as much as 55 years, all the way down to 20 years. He also delivered pins to several members who were homebound or currently living in assisted living facilities. Thank all of you for your commitment to The American Legion through your continued membership and the time you volunteer to support your community and our programs.

The National Commander challenged members to complete “100 Miles for Veterans and Children”. Many of our members accepted the challenge and began walking, bicycling, running, and motorcycling (AL Riders) to raise money for this worthy cause. This allowed Legionnaires to join in, while remaining “socially distanced”. More than 4,800 American Legion Family members and others joined the inaugural 100 Miles for Hope challenge, raising about \$150,000 for the Veterans & Children Foundation (V&CF). Thank you all for helping to make this fundraiser a huge success.

**(September)** Back to work on facility upgrades this month. The new HVAC system was finally installed above the lounge portion of our facility and with it, multiple new roof leaks. The unit is working well, and the bar is now only noisy because our members and patrons are in there enjoying themselves. Several of our new ceiling tiles were damaged and had to be replaced. Harris and Tolsma also installed a 5 X 10-foot patch on the roof above the video lottery machines. Hopefully, this will be a long-term solution to the roof leak problem in that area. EC member, Tom Smith, spent a lot of time cleaning/refurbishing exhaust fans and fixing our beer cooler(s) compressors/cooling fans. His efforts/expertise have saved the Post hundreds of dollars in repair costs. Harris also painted a few exterior/exit doors in the old building to improve their look and preserve the metal.

We also accepted bids from three different companies to repair/replace the flat roof over the HVAC/utility/bathroom/south entryway areas of the Post. The bid was awarded to Lowe Roofing Inc., for approximately \$20K. This will hopefully fix the worst areas of water leaks in that portion of our facility. The original timeframe for this project was October...then November...and now has been postponed by the contractor until April of 2021. Harris and Smith also applied sealant to leaky areas over the kitchen/small meeting room/EC meeting room/etc., of the old building. This seems to have helped, but rain/snow have been sparse, so it is hard to really gauge the effectiveness of these efforts. So far, so good.

**Post 22 Kitchen:** Commander Tolsma worked with our managers to hire new kitchen staff and prepare the facility for reopening on 19 September. We switched back to “steak night” on Wednesdays, and things are going well. Commander Tolsma, recognizing the outstanding job our Bar Manager (Jeremy Snyder) has been doing over the last year, asked the EC to promote him to Club Manager, in charge of the kitchen and cleaning staff as well as the bar. The EC voted unanimously in favor of this change. **The Post 22 Auxiliary also restarted their Tuesday night bingo this month.**

Our Americanism programs were front and center this month with schools back in session. Much of the emphasis was on recruiting students to take part in the Oratorical Contest that takes place starting in December. We also focused on what our Post needed to do to prepare for the inclusion of both Juniors and Seniors for Boys State this coming year. I would encourage all of you with children/grandchildren of appropriate age to get them involved and signed up for these incredible programs.

**(October)** Post 22 hosted the District 2 Fall meeting this year. Post officers, Auxiliary, Riders and management staff worked long hours to make this meeting a success. Despite fears of the Corona Virus,

the meeting was well attended by Posts throughout District 2. Department Commander Fred Nelson thanked Post 22 for hosting the event and presented our Vice Commander and SD Boys State Director **Christopher Van Delist, with SD Legionnaire of The Year honors for 2019-2020.** A huge thank you goes out to our Auxiliary for preparing and serving a wonderful meal following the meeting.

In early October, Shari Bradstream transferred to Post 22 and volunteered to rebuild our Honor Guard. She has been working diligently with the EC and member Gary Stanley to recruit and train our team. Finding members within the existing membership pool proved a challenge, so she simply went out and recruited new American Legion members and signed them up for the Honor Guard. If any of you are interested in becoming a member, please contact Shari and let her know. Her phone # is: 605-519-4350. We all look forward to having our own Honor Guard again after a long hiatus. Shari was appointed District 2 Americanism Chairman following the resignation of Paul Douglas (also a Post 22 member) at the District 2 Fall meeting. Thank you, Shari, and keep up the good work!

**Post 22 Baseball:** Our Athletic Officer (B. Garcia) announced the awarding of Regional National Tournaments (2022 and 2023) to Post 22. In addition, the State tournament was supposed to go to Post 22 in 2021, but it has been backed up to 2022. These tournaments will showcase our new stadium and are great fundraisers for the team. Garcia reported that construction is still on schedule for the new stadium. At the October EC meeting, Commander Tolsma talked about sponsorship purchases for the new stadium. We discussed sponsoring the home team dugout (will be an advertisement for Post 22), for \$2,500/year with 10-year commitment. **Motion by Van Delist to pay the \$2,500/year for 10 years. Second by Fink. Motion carried.** This money will be paid starting in 2021.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, Adjutant Harris submitted a Grant request to the State of SD for a share of the CARES Act funds being distributed to Non-profit organizations who were adversely affected by COVID-19 closures. Turns out it was time and effort well spent...more on that in November.

**(November)** One of the first things the EC did this month was to cancel our Veterans Day Dinner. After much discussion on the escalating number of COVID 19 infections and deaths in SD, it was decided to cancel the dinner out of an abundance of caution. The SD winds canceled our display of the U.S. and POW/MIA flags for a couple of weeks by snapping the rope (especially embarrassing during Veterans Day). Members Mike Ball and Don Dosch, along with the Rapid City Fire Department worked together to replace the rope and flags and get them flying once again. We also canceled the membership meetings for November and December because they fell too close to the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. We did not want to take a chance on members spreading the virus to each other at these meetings. Our next meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 28, 2021. The Riders chapter followed our lead on this and canceled their meetings as well. There was no EC meeting this month due to sick members, funerals, and travel. Another month canceled by the pandemic.

November was not a complete loss though...The State of SD awarded a \$28K grant to Post 22 using the CARES Act funds. This money went into our Capital Funds Saving account and will be used to cover COVID related business losses and work on the ever-leaky roof. A huge thank you goes out to our banker and Post member, Tom Weaver, for bringing this information/opportunity to our attention and providing advice on how to move forward. Also, thanks to our CPA and member Paul Rodriguez for pushing his staff to complete our 2019 tax return...it was a required part of our application.

**(December)** We finish the year in surprisingly good shape, despite all the challenges, and look forward to starting the new year. The vaccines are finally coming out for the Corona Virus, and God willing, we

can soon enjoy a “post pandemic” world once again. Wishing you and yours a happy and healthy holiday season!! We look forward to seeing all of you again in 2021. One final plug: For those of you who have not yet paid you 2021 dues, please consider doing so as a Christmas present to The American Legion, your Post and its overworked Membership Officer.

Sincerely,

Doug Harris

Post 22 Adjutant/Membership Officer