



Navy League of the United States - Minnesota Council



The North Star



Minnesota Council to Host Midwest Region Annual Navy League Conference

The Minnesota Navy League Council will host the 2024 Midwest Region Annual Navy League Conference April 19-20 at the Minneapolis Hilton, 1001 S. Marquette Ave. Minneapolis, MN 55403. Friday April 19 will include visits to the USS Ward Gun Memorial, the Minnesota State Capitol, The Greatest Generation exhibit at the Minnesota Historical Center with the day ending at Target field with a game between the Minnesota Twins and the Detroit Tigers. Saturday April 20 will cover several topics of interest to all councils, including guidance from Regional President Ward Cook and National President Chris Townsend. This will be followed by information on Sea Cadets and Youth Programs, the importance of Strategic/Succession Planning, information on membership challenges and Adopted unit events and a discussion on NROTC.



National President
Chris Townsend

Registration for the event is free, and can be done at: 2024 Navy League Midwest Regional Conference Registration: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/navy-league-upper-midwest-regional-conference-tickets-859562844607?aff=oddtcreatorIf>. If you plan to attend, please fill out the Registration link so we can track who is going and any special requests.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Minneapolis Hilton. The room block will be good only for a short time. Here is the information and link: Minneapolis Hilton: <https://book.passkey.com/go/NLUS> **Group Code/SRP: NLUS (In case you would like to call in your reservation)**

The Keynote speaker during lunch on Saturday will be Commander Jon Olson, USN (ret.) a National Security Expert. He will be speaking about the current situation in the Red Sea and the Middle East.



Cmdr. (Ret) Jon Olson



Regional President Ward Cook

As for your expenses, your meals, and drinks on Friday will be on your own. Admission to the Minnesota History Museum Information is here: <https://cart.mnhs.org/77960/78254> will be Adults are \$12 and Military and Seniors are only \$10. Tickets to the Minnesota Twins vs. The Detroit Tigers game on Friday night will be covered.

Finally, breakfast, snacks, drinks, and lunch on Saturday will also be provided. So, your hotel and transportation will be your only major expenses!

President

Joe Fraser
navyleagueminnesota@gmail.com

VP

Communications Pat Dolan
pkdolan37@gmail.com

VP Membership

Bob Dolan
dolanrp@verizon.net

Minnesota Council
10803 Oak Grove
Blvd Woodbury, MN
55129

A Message from the Minnesota Council President



Last week I had the opportunity to travel to Washington DC and speak with Luke Lorenz, Navy League of the US Senior Director for Legislative Affairs. As an organization that advocates for the sea services and works to expand our efforts of educating the public here in Minnesota, I wanted to sit down to discuss what the Navy League's focus is currently and where they see it going in the future. The timing of our meeting coincided with President Biden delivering his 2025 budget to Congress. While military spending is relatively flat going into the next budgetary cycle, the Navy League remains focused on ensuring the sea Services have the capabilities

and support infrastructure needed to carry out their assignments. One area of expanded interest in the coming year is focused on recruitment and retention of Sailors and Marines.

Additionally, there has been a general decrease in military retention rates over the past few years. While the Navy met their retention goals in 2023, not all the Sea Services are seeing the same good fortune. In response, the Services are expected to place an increased emphasis on housing and other benefits to keep service members. This may also help when it comes to attracting new talent.

For our part, I mentioned my concerns over recent reports on housing and lack of adequate medical access for our Coast Guard units in Duluth. While we recognize this is a Homeland Security and US Coast Guard issue to resolve, I am hopeful that the increase in visibility for quality-of-life issues might help make service on the Great Lakes better.

When it came to the topic of recruitment, I emphasized the value our Sea Cadet program brings to the communities, the young men and women who serve in the program, and the Sea Services. The Sea Cadet program is an excellent program that can provide cadets with valuable skill sets that will enable them to succeed in life, in and out of uniform. Unfortunately, the program suffers from a lack of financial support at the national level. I highlighted, with the right level of financial assistance, the Services could find eager young men and women who would consider serving the nation following high school.

While more discussion is needed on these subjects, with the increased national emphasis on recruitment and retention, I am hopeful that the highlighted need for support will help the Sea Services going forward.

In your service,
Joe

Heros Hub at the Twin Cities Auto Show – Tuesday April 2

The Navy League will have a booth at the Twin Cities Auto Show on Tuesday April 2 from 4 to 9 PM which will be a part of the Heroes Hub which will have other military related non-profits and local service providers. Military members and veterans get complimentary admissions and additional family members/guests get \$7 off.

The logo for the Twin Cities Auto Show is displayed. It features the text "Twin Cities" in a blue font at the top, "AUTO SHOW" in large, bold, black letters in the center, and "MAR TwinCitiesAutoShow.com 24" in a red and white banner at the bottom. Below the banner, it says "presented by KWIK TRIP" in red and white.

presented by **KWIK TRIP**

Minnesota Refugee recognizes the American Dream

From Iranian refugee to Navy linguist: LCDR Ahrar's realization of the American Dream

MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. --

Story credit to:

Senior Airman Zachary Foster

6th Refueling Wing Public Affairs

Published Feb. 6, 2024

Through trial and tribulation, he resisted the hand dealt to him by life and forged his own path to success and fulfillment. U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Shahram Sean Ahrar's journey started in the city of Shiraz located in Southeastern Iran. Ahrar lived with his father, mother and sister and spent his days either in the classroom or on the wrestling mat.



During Ahrar's teenage years, the peaceful standard of living he was accustomed to was launched into disarray. In 1980, Iran and Iraq engaged in a violent war, rampaging through both country's cities and devastating the lives of thousands. The war consumed more of the two nations every day. In response, the Iranian Army went door to door forcing young men from their families to fuel their efforts. Ahrar was faced with a life-altering decision at the age of 16. He could stay with his family and risk being drafted into the armed conflict, or he could flee and start his life over.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is a dictatorship," Ahrar said. "There was a war going on between Iran and Iraq at the time and the Revolutionary Guard Corps was enlisting and drafting teenagers into the military force. It was something that I did not believe in and did not want to do. The decision was clear; I needed to leave."

The Iranian revolutionaries took control of the American Embassy at the beginning of the Iraq-Iran War and captured 52 hostages, holding them prisoner for 444 days. This permanently scarred diplomatic relations between the two countries. As a result of the chaos that pursued, Ahrar and his mother fled to the nearest embassy in Turkey to plead for a student visa. Luckily, his uncle lived in America and needed little convincing to take in the young refugee.

"I remember the conversation that my dad had with my uncle on the phone when the decision was being made," Ahrar said. "He told him this, 'He's a very low maintenance kid. He's very disciplined. You don't have to do much with him. He will keep his nose in the books.'"

Ahrar quickly obtained all the required documentation to live with his uncle. All he needed was one signature from the attendant. Thousands of refugees flooded the American embassy in Istanbul daily and attendants were given strict orders to limit applications. Ahrar's fear and vulnerability was shared with the others attempting to escape war. If Ahrar's reasoning to go to America did not stand out in the eyes of the attendants, he would be denied.

Minnesota Refugee recognizes the American Dream (Continued)

Ahrar reached the front of the line after hours of waiting. His paperwork had been cleared, but he was met with a single question to prove his worth. “What guarantee do you give me that if I give you this visa and you go to America, you won’t stay over there?” Taking a minute to decide how to respond to the attendant, Ahrar chose his words carefully as this interaction would decide the fate of his life. “For me to sit here tell you 10 years in the future I will for sure come back to Iran after I finish my studies, I would be lying to you, and I’m not here to lie to you today,” Ahrar responded. “I’m here to apply for a student visa.” Without hesitation, the attendant stamped his paperwork.

“If you had said anything except what you just told me right now, I would have denied your visa on the spot,” the attendant said. “But the honesty of a 16-year-old is what’s making me give you this visa. Have a good day and study hard.” Within a month, Ahrar was off to live with his uncle in Joplin, Missouri, bringing his dreams of becoming a U.S. citizen with him. He said goodbye to his family, knowing the moment he left, he most likely would never see his home again.

“I’m a father now to an amazing 15-year-old son,” Ahrar said. “It wasn’t until I had him that I understood just how hard of a decision that must have been [for my family].” Ahrar made it to the United States and was able to continue his studies without fear. However, he was met with a problem. He did not speak English. According to Ahrar, growing up in Iran instilled a diverse mindset in its citizens. It was encouraged that residents learn multiple languages like Persian Farsi and Afghan Dari. Unfortunately for Ahrar, Western influence had fled the country with the American embassy taking their language with them.



One day, Ahrar’s uncle greeted him with a green dictionary titled, “Farsi to English,” and came with a new household rule: all conversations and questions needed to be translated into English to solicit a response. Ahrar relentlessly studied English in addition to his high school curriculum with the hopes of passing his classes. The cycle of hearing, translating, understanding and formulating a response burdened his life for months.

Ahrar learned the English language throughout his younger years and built a life for himself in America. He excelled academically and athletically in high school, which provided him the foundation for success in college. He continued competing in wrestling while preparing to graduate with a Bachelors of Art in English Literature at the Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Despite the positive trajectory of his journey, Ahrar was met with a complication. His visa was only valid during his time as a student, and with his graduation date quickly approaching he needed to take immediate measures to remain in the country. “When I was preparing to graduate, I received two letters from the Immigration and Naturalization Service,” Ahrar said. “The first said, ‘It’s been nice having you!’ and the second said, ‘Alright, time for you to leave.’” Ahrar knew if he returned home to Iran he would be prosecuted by an unjust system. With time running out, Ahrar’s roommate took him to the local INS office to make a case for U.S. citizenship. To Ahrar’s surprise, the meeting went well. He sat with an INS agent and described his situation. He described the war in Iran, the forced enlistments and the fear his return would lead to an unfavorable punishment.

Minnesota Refugee recognizes the American Dream (Continued)

“ [The INS] took my friend and I into a separate room for some questions,” Ahrar said. “They asked if he could vouch for me and if I had \$75 available. Of course, we said yes, and by the end of the day I had a temporary work visa and a promise that they would look into my situation. About a week prior to my graduation, I received my green card and was allowed to stay.” With his safety secured, Ahrar looked toward the future. He loved his time learning, wrestling and building relationships in college. His experience led to a lifelong passion for teaching and coaching.

For the next 30 years, the young refugee transformed into the well-respected Coach Ahrar. He made a comfortable life for himself and devoted his time to becoming a better coach and family man. One day, a few months prior to his 40th birthday, Ahrar sat deep in thought at his desk. He contemplated if coaching was bringing him the fulfillment he wanted in life. He frequently thought about serving the country that had given him a newfound life, but had never committed himself to a career change.

He picked up the phone that day and called the U.S. Navy recruiting office. By the end of the year, he was off to Officer Training School commissioning as a human resources officer. “I can tell you that my commission into the U.S. Navy was one of the proudest moments of my life,” Ahrar said. “You've got a 16-year-old kid coming from nothing, with nothing. As an immigrant, it's huge. It's something that I'm incredibly proud of, and I hope one day my son goes to the U.S. Naval Academy to become an officer.”

Ahrar's skills as a human resources officer and familiarity with both Middle Eastern culture and language was quickly put to use. In 2021, President Joseph Biden directed the Department of Homeland Security to lead Operation Allies Welcome. The two-year-long mission served to relocate and temporarily home Afghan refugees within the U.S. in response to the Global War on Terror. After a brief break in service, Ahrar was sprung into action at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, as a cultural liaison between the U.S. Army and refugee population.

Ahrar had a different perspective than most translators. He not only learned the language and culture firsthand, but he understood the fear of restarting life thousands of miles away from home. “I remember talking with a group of Afghan women,” Ahrar said. “They told me they were journalism majors studying in Kabul before coming to Fort McCoy. I told them, ‘I know things are very uncertain right now. Believe me, you are in a good place. You will need to study hard, and work to learn the language. It's not going to be easy, but know that you're not the only one who has ever immigrated to this country and has gone through what you're going to go through.’”

Today, Ahrar's actions as a linguist during Operation Allies Welcome earned him a position at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, working alongside Navy Reserve Special Operations Command Central as a human resources officer and Iranian cultural specialist. Ahrar's story conveys persistence, resilience and hope. His realization of personal achievement and helping others find their own is a testament to the ever-present American Dream. From Shiraz to Wisconsin, being a refugee and immigrant, a college graduate, a coach, a husband and father, and a service member, Ahrar is a shining light for those who have dreams despite what life has given them.



Minnesota Council VP Updates

VP Community Engagement - Joyce Lacey



During this quarter, the VP Community Engagement attended the St. Paul Winter Carnival Coronation at the St. Paul River Centre with VP Membership, Bob Dolan and VP Communications, Pat Dolan to support the Prince of the North Wind, Eddie Wiegert, whom the Minnesota Council sponsored. Lacey volunteered, on behalf of the Navy League, at volunteer check-in and to assist with the Memorabilia Display during the ten days of Carnival.

Lacey also attended the Twin Cities Squadron U. S. Naval Sea Cadets Corps Dining Out Event January 6th at VFW Post 1296 in Bloomington and donated a couple gift baskets for their Silent Auction Fundraiser.

She addressed the public and members of the Legislature February 27th regarding the importance of supporting our Sea Services at the State Capitol Administration Building in the Conference Room.

VP of Community Engagement will be representing the Navy League serving Dinner at the American Legion Post 357 March 23rd for the American Legion Birthday Celebration, attending the Disability Forum at the Minnesota State Capitol March 27th, attending Veterans Day on the Hill April 17th, attending the Regional Conference April 19-20 and helping with the Honor Flight May 6th.



Speaking at the State Capitol on the importance of the Sea Services

Upcoming events are participation at Twin Cities Auto Show for Military Appreciation Day, and the Youth Wheels, Tracks & Wings Event for the month of the Military Child at the Elbow Lake Airport April 27th from 1100 hours to 1400 hours. Don't miss these exciting upcoming events.

VP Council Programs/Events - Jeanette Sterner



The following events are being planned for the next quarter.

Heros Hub at the Twin Cities Auto Show – Tuesday April 2

The Navy League will have a booth at the Twin Cities Auto Show on Tuesday April 2 from 4 to 9 PM which will be a part of the Heroes Hub and have other military related non-profits and local service providers. Military members and veterans get complimentary admissions and additional family members/guests get \$7 off.

April Annual Meeting for All Members and Guests – Wednesday April 3

We would like to invite you to your annual meeting, in person at Orale on Wednesday April 3rd at 7 PM. We will be on the bar side. Orale is owned by a Marine Corps Veteran and is just West of 35W off the Diamond Lake Road exit. The address is 5447 Nicollet Ave, Minneapolis.



Minnesota Council VP Updates

Council Events (Continued)

May Happy Hour at Mancini’s Patio – Thursday May 16

On Thursday May 16, the Navy League invites you for happy hour from 4:30 to 6:30 PM at Mancini’s off West 7th in St Paul. We will plan to be in on the patio but will have the lounge as a backup option in case of inclement weather.

June – Happy 2/3rd Navy Birthday, a celebration at Fulton and the Twins Game – Thursday June 13

On June 13, which is the 4-month countdown to the Navy’s Birthday, we will meet at Fulton starting at 5 pm for a happy hour gathering and have the option to attend the Twins game. To indicate interest in the Twins game, please email Jeanette Sterner at Jeanmjoe@aol.com . Depending on interest, we can get a formal group ticket package in advance or utilize the military discount and/or purchase tickets closer to the game.

For any questions in advance or for the day of the event, please feel free to call Jeanette Sterner at 612 751 0263

VP Legislative Affairs - Bill James



With the upcoming general election, November 5, 2024, Navy League Legislative affairs is focusing on several key issues for the Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and Merchant Services. As Navy Leaguer’s we are reminded weekly of the importance the sea services play in our success and security as a Nation.

On the Minnesota level, all our representatives have been briefed on the top priorities for the various sea services. This includes ensuring that we have the manufacturing capability to build a 350 ship Navy, ensuring our Coast Guard team members pay is not at risk, developing plans to support the Jones Act ensuring our

merchant services are supported and engaged for movement of goods around the world, and ensuring our Marines have the right equipment on hand.

Finally, below are two good links to review for additional information on the 2024/2025 Defense budget broken down by Admiral Jamie Fogge from the Center for Maritime Strategy. He does a phenomenal job of putting things in perspective when it comes to the Budget to fund the Navy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRT3GgwPtWM>

Also noted is a sound piece on what the United States needs to do to contain the authoritarian positions of nations who are out to disrupt world order and security, namely Iran, North Korea, China, and Russia and what the United States needs to do, what they truly must do, to protect all of us from the destructive forces in play: <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2024/03/authoritarians-are-playing-win-america-cant-if-we-dont-show/395008/>

Minnesota Council April Annual Meeting for All Members and Guests
Wednesday April 3

Orale MEXICAN EATS

The Council Annual meeting will be held at Orale Mexican Eats on Wednesday April 3rd at 7 PM. We will be on the bar side. Orale is owned by a Marine Corps Veteran and is just West of 35W off the Diamond Lake Road exit. The address is 5447 Nicollet Ave, Minneapolis.



Minnesota Council VP Updates

Legislative Affairs (Continued)

As always, your engagement with your legislator is the single most important thing you can do to get in their ear and weigh in on the importance in cutting through the red tape, partisan politics, and woeful pace of getting the Nations business done. Believe me nothing gets their attention like an email, a letter or a phone call to the office leaning in on them as a “voter in their district” on behalf of the phenomenal men and women in the sea services to whom we are all indebted.

VP Youth Programs - Keith Larson



Navy League members know that the Naval Sea Cadet Corps is the Navy League’s flagship youth development program. In later years, Youth programs were expanded to include Navy and Marine Corps JROTC programs. The Navy League strongly supports the Sea Cadets and JROTC programs financially and through moral support, by making unit visits, helping arrange activities for the cadets, providing positive publicity, and recognizing the achievement of cadets. As to this last item, each Navy League is authorized to award the Theodore Roosevelt NLUS Youth Medal to the top cadet in each unit, each year. Our Minnesota Council provides this award to a cadet in

each of these three Sea Cadet units: Twin Cities Squadron, Polaris/Poseidon Division, and Twin Ports Division; and to a cadet in each of these three JROTC units: Washington Tech Magnet School Navy JROTC, Harding High School Navy JROTC, and Como Park High School Marine Corps JROTC.

Our Council awarded the Theodore Roosevelt NLUS Youth Medal to the cadet of the year in the Twin Cities Squadron and the Polaris/Trident Division this past January. We also awarded the related Theodore Roosevelt NLUS Youth Ribbon to the Leaguer cadet of the year in each of those two units. The Twin Ports Division in Duluth has a very small number of cadets as they continue to rebuild and they did not have a cadet of the year. However, I have recently spoken to officers at this unit who assured me they would have a cadet of the year Theodore Roosevelt NLUS Youth Medal recipient this coming winter.



Twin Cities Squadron Cadet of Year Airman Lillian Hartman



Twin Cities Squadron Leaguer Cadet Isaac Anderson

Finally, our Council will be presenting the Theodore Roosevelt NLUS Youth Medal to a top cadet in each of the three JROTC units we support: Washington Tech Magnet School Navy JROTC on April 24, Harding High School Navy JROTC on May 14, and Como Park High School Marine Corps JROTC on May 16.



Polaris Leaguer Cadet Katie Steiskal



Polaris NLUS Cadet of the Year Seaman Jonathon Steiskal



USS Minneapolis - Saint Paul News

USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul – Starting the New Year Strong.

MAYPORT, FL. (March 1, 2024) – The Freedom-variant littoral combat ship USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21) has completed its first quarter of the new year. After some much deserved time off during the ship’s holiday period, the crew got right back to work at the start of the New Year. USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul kicked off the year’s first quarter by completing initial stages of the certification process; required for deployment. The crew completed Damage Control and Cyber events.

USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul hosted Greg Coleman onboard in February in honor of black history month. Mr. Coleman gave a captivating speech to the crew, gathered in the Airborne Mission Zone (AMZ), about his journey in becoming the first black NFL punter in history. During his speech, he impressed upon the crew that teamwork, grit, and rising to the challenge are all essential elements to being successful on an individual and team level, especially in the armed forces. After his speech, Mr. Coleman took questions from the crew and then received a tour from the Commanding Officer. USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul held a tour onboard for the Bartram Trail High School AJROTC unit. Even though the ship is under dry dock repairs, the young men and women participating in the tour were able to key aspects of the ship to include the Bridge, Messdecks, Foc’sle, Mission Control Center (MCC), AMZ, the Flight Deck, the waterjets, and one of the crew berthings.

In March, USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul also reached another important milestone by passing another Industrial Environment Fire Drill. It ensures that the ship’s crew has the ability and self-sufficiency to fight a major industrial fire onboard alongside Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department (JFRD).



Greg Coleman spoke to the crew during Black History Month

USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul received four Command Excellence Awards. The criterion for each award is the readiness of the command to carry out its assigned wartime tasks, and is based on a year-long evaluation. To win, a ship, aviation squadron, or unit must demonstrate the highest state of battle readiness. The crew was awarded the Engineering Survivability, Communications Command & Control, Ship Safety, and Maritime Warfare/Defense Command Excellence Awards, sweeping 4 of 4 awards in the ship’s first year of eligibility.

Entering the summer, the ship will be exiting dry dock and returning to base. Around the time all major repairs are complete, the ship will have a busy schedule continuing in the fall with more intensive training events. Until then, and on behalf of USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul, CDR Justin Neff would like to wish you, the reader, a strong and productive start to the New Year!



USS Minnesota News

USS Minnesota has a new Chief of the Boat

MTCM(SS) Kevin P. Lewis

Chief of the Boat

USS MINNESOTA (SSN 783)



Master Chief Lewis was born and raised in Chicago, IL where he joined the Navy in January 2001. He is currently the Chief of the Boat onboard USS MINNESOTA (SSN 783) stationed in Pearl Harbor, HI accompanied by his wife Erica and three children Zach, Connor, and Brooklynn.

His sea duties consist of USS NEVADA (SSBN 733)(GOLD), USS NEBRASKA (SSBN 739)(BLUE), USS HENRY M. JACKSON (SSBN 730)(BLUE), and USS MAINE (SSBN 741)(BLUE). While onboard USS NEVADA from spring of 2002 to the fall of 2005, he completed a shipyard period, Demonstration and Shakedown

Operation (DASO) 18 and 4 strategic patrols. As a member of USS NEBRASKA from January 2009 to the fall of 2011 he completed 5 strategic patrols and was the 2011 Sailor of the Year and qualified Diving Officer of the Watch. From November 2013 to October 2016 he was stationed onboard JACKSON completing 4 strategic patrols and qualified and served as the Strategic Weapons System Master Chief. Master Chief Lewis reported to USS MAINE in the fall of 2018 and completed an Engineering Refueling Overhaul, DASO 30, returned MAINE to strategic service, and completed one strategic patrol.

Master Chief Lewis's shore tours include Sub School in Groton, Missile Tech A and C schools in Kings Bay, Ga, a tour at Strategic Weapons Facility Atlantic in Kings Bay, GA. from fall of 2005 to the December of 2008. A two-year tour at Director of Strategic Systems Program at Cape Canaveral, FL. from December 2011 to October 2013 where he was promoted to Chief Petty Officer. From October 2016 to the fall of 2018, he was the Explosive Handling Wharf Leading Chief at Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific in Bangor, WA. Finally, his most recent shore duty brought him to Pearl Harbor and served as the TYCOM Readiness Evaluation (TRE) team SWSMC and the pacific force SWSMC.

His personal awards include the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (four awards), and Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (eight awards) as well as numerous unit, campaign awards. He's a graduate of the U.S. Navy Senior Enlisted Academy and Command Master Chief Course.

He assumed the duties as the 5th Chief of the Boat of USS MINNESOTA (SSN 783) on February 22, 2024.

Command Updates

Navy Talent Acquisition Group Northern Plains Quarterly Update



Happy Spring Navy League of Minnesota!

As the brisk air slowly tapers away and makes way for the sunnier days, we prepare for the great Northern plains area to spring back to life. As adults we begin planning and preparing our homes and families to accommodate this cycle of life for another year smarter and wiser than the last. Whether it's seeding your lawn at the peak time for the best results and greener grass, registering early for your child's summer camp, or even preparing to enter the workforce or attend college. These are all things that will have the best outcomes if you plan ahead of time, and prepare yourself for continued learning and growth.

The same is done here at NTAG Northern Plains. As the new Commanding Officer, just taking over in December, I was able to watch, learn, prepare and plan as the Executive Officer I was able to envision our future growth and path to success. Since taking over we have made some changes in how we operate to ensure that we are maximizing our growth potential to meet critical mission requirements that require future Navy personnel.

But just as planting seeds for new beginnings, things will not happen overnight. It is a process that requires planning, patience, and for our Sailors, perseverance. And so far our results are trending in the right direction. Our social media presence is being bolstered with nationwide campaigns gathering support



from higher echelon commands. Our recruiters are overcoming obstacles, such as manning challenges and a dwindling pool of willing/eligible applicants, and they are sure making moves! So far, in the past few months we have been able to increase our future sailor numbers by approximately 25%!

However, we are not there yet. In these trying times where job opportunities are vast, and civilian employers are competing with the military's framework by beginning to offer paid educational opportunities, relocation expenses, and increased medical and dental benefits, WE

WILL NOT WAIVER! Not only do we offer these benefits, but an adventure of a lifetime that cannot be copied.

This is why the support of the Navy League is crucial in what we do. Your continued outreach and support is instrumental in supporting our efforts at NTAG Northern Plains, as well as educating the public of the importance of the Sea Services.

THE NAVY'S NEXT FUTURE SAILOR
Navy Talent Acquisition Group Northern Plains

FUTURE SAILOR
ABBY HANSON

FROM: Minnesota

JOINED FROM: NTAG Northern Plains Special Warfare Warrior Challenge

RECRUITER: SOCS John McDonough (712) 635-7541

WHY I JOINED? *"My dad was in the Navy...I have always gravitated toward a career in the military."*

Command Updates



Navy Talent Acquisition Group Northern Plains Quarterly Update (Continued)

As mentioned earlier, planning for our continued growth also means setting up opportunities to engage and educate our area of responsibility. Here are some upcoming events happening in our area that is sure to increase, as summer grows closer.



May 18-19: Duluth Airshow, Duluth, Minn.

June 15-16: Deke Slayton Airfest, featuring the Blue Angels, La Crosse Regional Airport, Wisc.

July 12-14: HyVee IndyCar race weekend, Iowa Speedway, Newton, Iowa

July 22-28: NAVCO Navy Week and Blue Angels air show, Fargo, N.D.

Aug 24-25: Defenders of Freedom: Air and Space Show, Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.



We look forward to taking on these challenging times to find the best and brightest Future Sailors to be the newest leaders of the fleet.

Many thanks,
CDR Jonny “DOZER” Kane,
Commanding Officer, NTAG Northern Plains
#HAMMERDOWN!!!



NRC Minneapolis



BG(R) Christie Nelson (MN ESGR Volunteer) gives training on Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Program

Command Updates

Maritime Safety Unit - Duluth



MSU Duluth marine inspectors have been out in the shipyard most of this winter inspecting the AMERICAN SPIRIT, LEE A. TREGURTHA, PAUL R. TREGURTHA, JOHN G. MUNSON, ARTHUR M. ANDERSON, and JOHN J. BOLAND. With the locks opening March 22nd this year, these vessels are ready to get back into service nearing the end of their layup season. These inspectors spend roughly over 40 hours a week working on winter layup inspections and call outs in the field. This is the busiest time of year for these inspectors, so they work around the clock to ensure these vessels are fit for service. Photos include some of our inspectors on a bench aboard the ARTHUR M. ANDERSON after conducting a visual examination of the vessel's boilers, CWO2 Donald Munk next to some of the LEE A. TREGURTHA's propeller blades at a local shop, a Nondestructive Testing Technician conducting UT Testing on the LEE A. TREGURTHA's blade bolts, and LT Sean Murphy in a mud drum within one of the ARTHUR M. ANDERSON's propulsion boilers.

If you or know someone who is hosting a marine event on or near a federal navigable waterway or is hosting an event where spectators may block a federal navigable waterway (impede commercial vessels), please inform your nearest USCG unit to see if you need to submit a Marine Event Permit through USCG Homeport.

It is also that time of the year where our members are receiving orders and departing the unit. This year we will see Commanding Officer CDR Jarrod DeWitz departing to go be the Deputy at Sector LA/LB, California; Executive Officer LCDR William Hawn retiring after 20+ years in service, LT Joseph McGinnis departing to be the Commanding Officer of Marine Safety Unit Lafayette, LA; Marine Science Technician Second Class Dan Purse retiring after 20 years of service. Fair winds and following seas shipmates! You will be missed



Waterways management division at MSU Duluth is starting to receive Marine Event applications and working on getting Marine Event Permits and Non-Permit Letters out to those submitting for their

Lt. Murphy in the mud drum

event. Our office receives roughly 13 events every year but must read through each application and think of the risk factors and environmental hazard potentials associated with each event.



Command Updates



USCGC Spar

SPAR retrieved buoys during fall retrieval, but overall the ship has had a quiet ice breaking season in the Twin Ports with the mild winter this year. The SPAR crew participated in ice rescue training in Duluth Harbor to help the crew stay sharp to assist with potential rescues during the winter season.

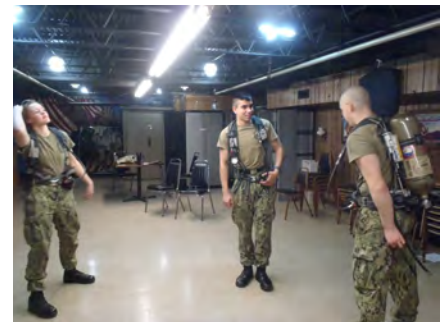


Twin Ports Sea Cadets

During the last quarter, Twin Ports Division spent the winter months focusing on essential workups. With the short winter, the command's operational season will be starting sooner than normal. The first item on the extensive list was the phasing in of new SCBA's. (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus) Twin Ports Division specializes in medical, damage control, and shipboard operations.

Since 2011, Twin Ports Division has been using outdated MSA low-pressure, belt-mounted regulator air packs. In 2023, Duluth Fire Department phased out its high-pressure Scott 4.5 air packs, for newer models. The City of Duluth formally transferred 10 Scott 4.5 air packs to the non-profit supporting Twin Ports Division. The 10 new Scott 4.5 air packs are the same air packs used in the rest of the fleet onboard our navy ships. The integrated electronic P.A.S.S. device and movement detection hardware on the 10 new air packs also make them more technologically advanced than the ones currently used in the fleet as well. Sailors both officer and enlisted within the command spent January and February learning the new air packs.

In other workups, cadets have been receiving in-rate training (IRT) in their designated departments along with command-wide P.Q.S. sign-off. Twin Ports Division will be shipboard again in March involving new personnel to complete their 304 P.Q.S. Each drill weekend will see the completion of at least 1 P.Q.S. until all medical, 3M, and damage control qualifications are complete. Final test out for medical certifications should take place in May before the command mobilizes in medical support of Grandma's Marathon in June.



Command Updates

Twin Cities Squadron - Sea Cadets



After wrapping up the fall training season, the cadets of the Twin Cities Squadron have been steaming all ahead in 2024.

On 6 JAN the unit held our annual Dining Out at the Bloomington VFW Post 1296, hosted by Cmdr. Brooks Moldestad. In attendance were honored guests CPT Bill Radomski, North Central Area Commander of US Naval Sea Cadets, and CDR Jonny “Dozer” Kane,



Commanding Officer of NTAG- Great Plains as co-keynote speakers. We also welcomed CDR Chris Schmid, Commanding Officer of the NRC-Mpls, and LCDR Keith Larson, Director of Youth Programs for the NLUS-MN Council. The night was capped with several cadets taking home awards. AN Parker Leiter was awarded the American Legion General Military Excellence Medal, AN Lillian Hartman earned both Rookie Cadet of the Year and Sea Cadet of the Year – a remarkable feat. PO3 Alex Tiaden was honored as Petty Officer of the Year. PO2 Maguire Weiland was awarded the VFW Sea Cadet Medal as captain of the color guard, and MAA PO2 Josef Jirik received the SAR Bronze Good Citizenship Medal. AN Dexter Paasch received the DAR Naval Sea Cadet Medal. In a family affair, PO Isaac Anderson and ENS Lisa Anderson received the League Cadet and Officer of the Year Awards, respectively.



In keeping with the TCS motto “Forti in Perpetuum”, the cadet leadership wanted to conduct winter survival training during JAN drill...in MN. Mother Nature was having none of it blanketing the cadets with a sunny mild 45F day and no snow cover. The cadets used the mild weather to practice small unit tactics and assault the MOUT (Military Operations Urban Terrain) site. The drill weekend wrapped up with a lesson in



EST Training

Quarterdeck procedures and some shoot/no-shoot training in the EST (Engagement Skills Trainer).

FEB means swim quals! Each year, the cadets must qualify by completing the USN swim qualifications. This rigorous test requires cadets to perform multiple distance swims using different techniques, jump from height to simulate an abandon ship maneuver, and inflate their uniform to create a makeshift flotation device. Those attempting to qualify as first class swimmers also had to complete a 25m underwater swim. All hands qualified as Basic Swimmers, the minimum requirement. Of those, an amazing 11 qualified as First Class, another 11 Second Class and 4 Third Class. To complete the drill weekend, CDR Sheehan taught a course on Mass Communications in the Navy, and the ENS Anderson conducted a hands on photojournalism evolution. Several of the photos are featured on our unit social media accounts.



Photojournalism skills at work!!

Command Updates



Twin Cities Squadron - Sea Cadets (Continued)

TCS also participated in the STEM Day at Camp Ripley with the NSW EOD Group 2, learning about ice and salvage diving, and explosive ordinance disposal. Unfortunately, the low ceiling prevented the helos from flying that day, but it was a great event for the cadets. Special thanks to NTAG for the invite.



During the first 3 months of 2024, the TCS onboarded 15 new cadets raising our unit strength to 40 which is the highest since 2016-17. To support the unit, a handful of new officers have also been onboarded, marking the first time since the pandemic that the leadership cadre is at full strength.



TCS also said goodbye to a dedicated volunteer. Lt. Col Barney Uhlig (USA ret) was a former Skipper, and longtime OPS Officer in the TCS. Under his command the unit rose to excellence and swelled to over 100 strong. The unit will remain grateful to Lt. Col Uhlig for his stewardship, mentorship and friendship over his years of service. In keeping with Gen. McArthur, Lt. Col. Uhlig opted to retire quietly and without fanfare. We thank him for his service to the nation.



MAR drill wrapped up the Q1 training season, and that meant Annual Inspection. The cadets are graded on military bearing, uniform care, attendance, academics and general naval knowledge. The unit has hopes of scoring well, and returning glory and pride to the rich legacy of the TCS. Overall, the cadets took large strides in the areas of drill attendance, advanced trainings attended, academics and advancements. The uniform inspection was on par with previous years, and was inspiring while leaving some room for improvement. One of the highlights for Col. Ecklund (



TCS Inspection

USAF) while conducting the inspection was LC3 Bridger Helland (12 yo) reciting her 6th general order (and favorite) with poise and confidence. Inspection day wrapped up with the unit's annual Chili and Pie cook-off. What started as fun way to undress after inspection has grown into a cultural phenomenon. This year we had over 15 different chili entries, and at least 12 pies. AA Sundseth's family was a repeat champ in the chili division, and PO2 Tiaden's family took down the pie competition with a Banana Cream. Special thanks to LCDR Charlie Rassat and Col. Kevin Ecklund for conducting our inspection, and demanding a standard of excellence. As we look ahead to the spring, TCS is excited about the opportunity to conduct joint training with Polaris Battalion, and pin another Chief.

In closing, the Twin Cities Squadron wishes to thank the MN Council for the continued support and dedication to the USNSCC mission. Hooyah to our shipmates across the world keeping the watch. We are grateful for your service and sacrifice.

Check out our Facebook page for more NSCC Twin Cities Squadron videos and content.

Command Updates

Polaris Battalion Update



January saw a lot happening with the Polaris Battalion kicking off this season by hosting their annual Military Ball and executing their respective roles to the fullest. Senior cadets trained the newer recruits on how to perform different aspects of the ceremony and instructed a class about the Missing Man Table.

At the ball the following awards were presented: Polaris Cadet of the Year SN Jonathan Steiskal, Polaris Petty Officer of the Year PO2 Mason Hoff, Polaris Recruit of the Year SN Hannah Tierney, Polaris Officer of the Year ENS Jason Packa, Polaris Instructor of the Year Sargent Joshua Rike, Polaris Auxiliary of

the Year Jean Larkin, TS Trident Cadet of the Year PO3 Katie Steiskal, TS Trident PO of the Year Taylor Larkin, TS Trident Officer of the Year ENS Robert Steiskal, The Sons of the American Revolution Award went to PO1 Hunter Packa, The Daughters of the American Revolution Award went to CPO Joseph Larkin, The VFW Medal went to CPO Remijia Challander, and the NLUS Theodore Roosevelt Awards went to SN Jonathan Steiskal of Polaris Battalion and PO3 Katie Steiskal of the TS Trident. In special attendance was the MN State Senator representing Chisago and Isanti Counties Mark Koran, who is a personal supporter and friend of Polaris Battalion

At January drill, our cadets went over the history and current functioning of Fort Snelling along with having Recruit Orientation. Also in January, with hockey season in full swing our Color Guard represented Polaris Battalion Sea Cadets with honor for several Cambridge-Isanti hockey games.

February drill saw the Polaris Battalion Sea Cadets completing some of their required annual training such as Equal Opportunity Training, New Cadet Indoc Orientation and Code of Conduct training. They also went through a Uniform inspection in preparation for the Annual Inspection which will occur at the March drill. The cadets got to work on their practical knot skills with survival knot tying. After which they took their skills and knowledge outdoors to see how it could be used in conjunction with some practical survival skills training by practicing building survival shelters. Aside from knots and survival, the cadets started getting into Riot Gear Training through the use of airsoft riot shields and training batons, along with getting hands on experience with night vision. They also had 4 new cadets participating in close order drill training through marching and turning evolutions.



Command Updates

Polaris Battalion Update (Continued)



CPO Aiden Larkin

On February 25th CPO Aiden Larkin was pinned, joining his brother, making them the first sibling set of Chiefs for the Polaris Battalion. Aiden Larkin joined the Sea Cadets organization when he was 10 years old as a League Cadet, following his older brother into the program. Before attaining the rank of CPO, Aiden completed 9 advanced trainings, over 300 hours of community service, lead the color guard for 3 years, earned 45 different awards (7 of which are Academic Achievement Awards) including the coveted VFW Naval Sea Cadet Medal. The VFW Naval Sea Cadet Medal is awarded to cadets who demonstrate outstanding leadership, high moral character, and outstanding military bearing. Commanding Officer Lieutenant Pearson and ENS Packa presented the advancement award.

It was an extraordinarily special event as his older brother, Chief Petty Officer Joe Larkin, 17, was the Master of Ceremonies for the pinning and CPO Aiden Larkin's parents Shawn & Jean Larkin were the ones to pin the anchors onto his collar signifying his promotion. Total staff and cadets present at the ceremony was 29, including his younger brother Recruit T. Larkin. The new CPO Larkin is most proud of his academic achievement awards and his current 3.8 GPA. He is looking forward to growing the organization through cadet recruitment and is making that his main focus with his new advanced rank.

March drill will have the Polaris Battalion going through their Annual Inspection as well as planning and starting the build of the replacement Osceola bridge for the ARC (The

Association Retreat Center). The ARC is located in northwestern Wisconsin along the St. Croix River Valley and from the years of 1954 through 1975 that location was home to a US Airforce Radar Base. Sea Cadets will be using their Seabees training to plan and execute the expansion of the bridge from a walking bridge to a sturdy enough bridge that the ARC can cross it with vehicles.

On March 30th the cadets will also be participating in Air Down There Scuba with the Twin Cities Squadron. Air Down There Scuba will be administering a refresher course for those cadets that already have their certification in diving, along with administering intro to scuba classes for those cadets who haven't experienced scuba diving before but want to give it a shot.

Command Updates

University of Minnesota Naval ROTC Update



The University of Minnesota NROTC has been thriving since returning from winter break. The Gopher Battalion has capitalized on a number of opportunities to train and develop professionally as leaders and future Naval and Marine Corps Officers.



The semester started on a high note with an awards ceremony to highlight Midshipman and Active-Duty students who have excelled in the program. The achievements included physical fitness awards, color guard awards, and various forms of academic excellence awards.



In early February, Navy-option Midshipmen had the opportunity to tour the Prairie Island Nuclear Power Generating facility. This tour included views of the control room, turbine room, training facilities, and a walkthrough of all of the support equipment. This was an amazing experience for the Midshipmen because it allowed them to develop a deeper understanding of the scale and importance of nuclear power and draw direct connections to the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program. The tour was given by several retired Navy veterans who have first-hand experience in Naval Nuclear Power and were able to offer perspectives on commercial power generation and the energy that the Navy harnesses for propulsion.



Gopher Battalion Midshipmen continue to receive professional military education (PME) briefs on a wide range of topics such as personal finance, sexual assault prevention and response (SAPR), and tactical combat casualty care (TCCC). This education is but a taste of what our future Officers will receive in the fleet, but it keeps them well-rounded and aware of the professional knowledge expected of a Naval and Marine Corps Officer.

Later this month, after passing an extensive safety exam, all Midshipman will practice weapons handling procedures and improve their marksmanship at Stock and Barrel Gun Range in Chanhassen. The Midshipmen will have the opportunity to practice both rifle and pistol familiarity during this semester's range day.

After returning from Spring Break, the Gopher Battalion looks forward to several big events in the upcoming months. All Midshipmen will participate in a mess dress uniform inspection in preparation for our annual formal dining-in event. Additionally, Marine-options will attend a joint field training exercise with the University of Iowa NROTC that will enhance their planning and tactical warfighting abilities. At the end of the school year, the battalion will participate in a Joint Service Review where Midshipmen will receive awards and be recognized for their outstanding achievements throughout the school year.

Thank you for your support and Happy Spring from the University of Minnesota NROTC Battalion!

Command Updates



Washington Tech Magnet School JROTC Update

WTMS NJROTC Eagle Company prepared for and passed our Area Manager Inspection in January. Six Cadets were acknowledged by the Area Manager for receiving perfect scores on their personnel inspection and awarded Exemplary Personal Appearance Ribbon. The Cadets were Tenesha Clement, Terena Clement, Edna Guevara, Sin Lia, Darion McEntee and Aaron Vue.



Returning Cadets and Instructors welcomed more than a dozen new Cadets to the program at the start of 2nd Semester. Eagle Company promoted well over 30 Cadets this quarter.



On January 20th, Eagle Company held its first annual Washington War Eagle Challenge. The Challenge consisted of Color Guard, drones, academic and physical challenges. The Eagle Company took 3rd place overall, which was our first trophy since 2019! Later that same day, the Cadets of Eagle Company held our Navy Ball. It was a full and rewarding day. A good time was had by all in attendance as guests enjoyed dinner, danced, and played games.

C/ Seaman Apprentice Klo Doe Wah and C/ LT Ethan Yang. Photo by C/SR Anna Lee.



Eagle Company Cadets provided nearly 100 hours of Community Service in support of events at Washington Technology Magnet School, local elementary schools, and local community organizations.



We presented over 70 awards to Cadets this quarter. Our Color Guard Teams, Captained by C/PO3 Tenesha Clement and C/PO3 Aaron Vue, presented Colors at two sessions of the Minnesota State High School League Wrestling Tournament at the Excel Energy Center. They have been chosen to present Colors at the Saint Paul Saints 2024 home opener at the end of March.



From Left to right: C/PO3 Sophia Xiong, C/PO3 Tenesha Clement, C/PO3 Aaron Vue, C/PO3 Tareena Clement, C/SN Ashley Vang. Photo by C/SA Edna Guevara.

Command Updates

Como Park Marine Corps JROTC Program Update



Como Park Cougars had a busy quarter. In January, the cadets took to frozen Lake Como for Broom Ball. Later that month they had a remarkable performance at a Drill Competition in Indianapolis where the Unarmed Teams had a superb 2nd place overall at the MCJROTC Region 1 Sectional meet and Armed Teams took two first places in Inspection & Regulation. Their teamwork, professionalism & pride today was noteworthy.



Como Color Guard presents colors at the State Wrestling Tournament

In February, the cadets stayed engaged and involved in the community. They completed the Cretin Durham Hall Upper Midwest Challenge with a first place overall in the Unarmed Drill / Inspection portion. They also had an archery match with Johnson Air Force JROTC and lastly the Color Guard Team supported several Cougar Basketball games. Additionally, Junior Cadet Corporal Samuel Hunt led the Color Guard Team at the Minnesota State Wrestling Tournament in front of thousands of patrons at the Saint Paul Excel Energy Center.

March saw the MCJROTC Cougars in Des Moines, Iowa at a Drill meet. Additionally, the wrapped up their annual Cadet Winter Leadership Camp. High

archery shooters were Cadet Corporal Hunt and Cadet Private First Class Noll. Horseback riding, a 5- mile sunset hike, Raider training / obstacle course, sports, hot Asian chow, and lastly camping under freezing winter temperatures. Cadets got a taste of the grit of our Marine Corps.



Como cadets at Cretin Durham Hall Upper Midwest Challenge

Finally, the Como Park MCJROTC program went through their semi-annual "TMCI" IG inspection. It lasted two days and included all aspects of the program compliance, safety, operations, training, period of instruction, education, logistics, administration, policies, procedures, uniforms, cleanliness, cadet events, morale, and lastly, all hands formation & uniform inspection. That JROTC Cougar pride was alive, and all cadet's prep and practice paid off by earning the grade of "EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS" in all areas for the first time ever at CPSHS.

Command Updates

Harding High School JROTC Program Update



Harding High School Navy JROTC started the 2023-2024 school year out strong by hosting our annual Great North American Team Sports (GNATS) Competition.

We competed at North Branch High School's Viking Challenge, placing first in Personnel Inspection, Unarmed Drill, Color Guard, Physical Fitness, and winning first place overall.

At Como Park High School's Devil Dog Drill Competition, we place second in JV Unarmed Drill, third in Varsity Unarmed Drill and Color Guard, and third place overall.

Harding Knight Navy competed at the 8-state Area 15 regional Drill Competition and won 1st Place in Physical Fitness, 3rd Place in Personal Inspection, 4th Place in Color Guard, 5th Place in Armed Drill, 5th Place in Armed Exhibition, 5th Place in Unarmed Exhibition, and 4th Place Overall! Special congratulation to the individuals' winners:

- 1st Place Male Pushups Eh Yun Gey
- 2nd Place Female curl-Ups Min Oo
- 3rd Place Female Curl-Ups Natalie Westin
- 5th Place Female Pushups Bonnie Jondro
- 3rd Place Male Curl-Ups William Rubio
- 4th Place Male Curl-Ups Kb Ray
- 2nd Place Armed Knockout Jayden Vang

While we were in the Great Lakes Area, we also took a tour of Recruit Training Command and got to experience Navy Boot Camp first hand!

We also attended the Juggernaut Sports Competition at Fargo South High School, taking home 1st place in Volleyball, and will be competing at the Sioux Falls Invitational Drill meet at the end of March 2024.



**The Minnesota Council wants to
TAKE YOU OUT TO THE BALLGAME!!**

Join us at Fulton Brewery starting at 5 pm for a happy hour gathering. Following that join us to attend the Twins against the Oakland Athletics. Please email Jeanette Sterner at Jeanmjoe@aol.com if you are interested. Depending on interest, we can get a formal group ticket package in advance or utilize the military discount and/or purchase tickets closer to the game





Other News

DID YOU KNOW?

By Brandon Montanye

“December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.” These are the words that President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to the nation in his request to Congress for a declaration of war. The attack resulted in 2,403 American casualties. To include Minnesota born, CAPT Franklin Van Valkenburgh, the Captain of the USS Arizona (BB-39). But did you know that one of, if not, the first casualty of the attack was Minnesotan Ensign Walter M. Willis.



Ensign Willis was born in Minneapolis, January 14, 1917. After graduating from De LaSalle High School, he attended the University of Minnesota. He then joined the Marine Corps and served one tour earning the rank of Private First Class. After that he enlisted in the Navy as a Seaman 2nd class in September of 1939 at the Naval Air Station (NAS) in Minneapolis. In December of 1939 he received orders to report to NAS Pensacola as an Aviation Cadet for flight training. He was designated a Naval Aviator on August 14, 1940. He received his commission as an Ensign on September 10, 1940.

Following flight school and commissioning, Willis received orders to Bombing Squadron 6 (VB-6), which was part of the USS Enterprise (CV-6) Air Group, flying the Douglas SBD Dauntless. Although a junior officer, he had a reputation as one of the best aviators in the squadron.

On the morning of December 7th, Enterprise was at sea 215 miles West of Oahu. A total of eighteen aircraft were sent ashore to Ford Island at dawn that morning. The aircraft were to conduct a scouting mission from the Northeast to the Southeast of the carrier in route to Pearl Harbor. As the aircraft arrived over the island of Oahu, they were caught between the guns defending the island and the Japanese attack force.



A total of seven SBDs were shot down. One of them being Ensign Willis' aircraft. Killing both him and his crewman, Coxswain Fred John Ducolon. It would later be reported that they shot down two Japanese Zeros before being shot down themselves. This merely by accident event of them stumbling upon Japanese planes attacking Pearl Harbor has been depicted in Hollywood movies like “Tora, Tora, Tora” and both “Midway” movies.

Ensign Willis and his crewman Coxswain Fred John Ducolon names are listed on the Tablets of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial, in Hawaii, commonly known as “Punchbowl.”

His parents also placed a marker at the Fort Snelling National Memorial Cemetery. The Navy likewise honored Ensign Willis by naming a ship after him. The USS Willis (DE-395), she was an Edsall-class destroyer escort. On 14 September 1943 she was launched and christened. The ship's sponsor was Mrs. Marie E. Willis, Ensign Walter M. Willis' mother. And now you know.



**Navy League of the United States
Minnesota Council
2024 Officers**

President	Joe Fraser	navyleagueminnesota@gmail.com
1st VP/Secretary	Brandon Montanye	brandon_montanye@hotmail.com
Vice President Communications	Pat Dolan	pkdolan37@gmail.com
Vice President Membership	Bob Dolan	dolanrp@verizon.net
Treasurer	Mark Stange	mark1stange@gmail.com
VP Adopted Ships, Active/Reserve	Brian Skon	bdskon@gmail.com
VP Council Programs/Events	Jeanette Sterner	jeanjoe@aol.com
VP Youth Programs	Keith Larson	larson_keith@yahoo.com
Director STEM Programs	Mark Salmen	mjsalmen@aol.com
VP Community Engagement	Joyce Lacey	usnavyleague.mn.outreach@gmail.com
VP Legislative Affairs/Partnerships	Bill James	williamljames3@gmail.com
Director Business Dev	Brian Skon	bdskon@gmail.com

2024 CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

April	Entire Month
Month of the Military Child	April 2
Twin Cities Auto Show	April 3
MN Council Monthly Meeting – Orale	April 5
Gold Star Spouses Day	April 9
National Former POW Recognition Day	April 14
Air Force Reserve Birthday	April 19-20
Midwest Regional Conference	



May	Entire Month
Asian Pacific Heritage Month	May 8
VE Day	May 12
Military Spouse Appreciation Day	May 14
Mother's Day	May 16
MN Council Happy Hour – Mancini's	May 18
Armed Forces Day	May 27
Memorial Day	



June	Entire Month
PTSD Awareness Month	June 6
D Day	June 7-11
National Navy League Convention – Dallas	June 12
Women's Veterans Day	June 13
Happy 2/3 Navy Birthday Celebration – Fulton's	June 14
Army Birthday	June 14
Flag Day	June 14 (MACV – MOA)
50th Anniversary Vietnam War Commemoration	June 16
Father's Day	June 19
Juneteenth	

