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What is the meaning behind Veterans Day?

Veterans Day is intended to thank and honor all those who served honorably in the military — living and dead — whether in wartime or peace.

In fact, Veterans Day is largely intended to thank living veterans for their service, to acknowledge that their contributions to our national security are appreciated.

While Veterans Day is often confused with Memorial Day, the two observances serve different purposes and have different histories. Memorial Day, which has its roots in the post-Civil War effort to “memorialize” all those who died in that war, has become a modern holiday to remember those from all wars and conflicts who gave their lives in service to the country.

In December 2000 the U.S. Congress passed and the president signed into law The National Moment of Remembrance Act to “encourage the people of the United States to give something back to their country, which provides them so much freedom and opportunity” by encouraging and coordinating commemorations of Memorial Day and the National Moment of Remembrance.

The National Moment of Remembrance encourages all Americans to pause wherever they are at 3 p.m. local time on Memorial Day for two minutes of silence to remember and honor those who have died in service to the nation.

Veterans Day, however, was first known as Armistice Day as a celebration of the resolution of World War I, a peace recognized historically on the date and time of that event, Nov. 11, 1918, at 11 a.m., and salutes surviving service members as well as those who have passed away since their service.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming Nov. 11 as Veterans Day and called upon Americans everywhere to rededicate themselves to the cause of peace.

He issued a presidential order directing the head of the Veterans Administration (now the Department of Veterans Affairs) to form a Veterans Day National Committee to organize and oversee the national observance of Veterans Day.

In 1968, in keeping with the Monday Holiday Bill, Congress briefly moved Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October, but it

became quickly apparent that the American public held fast to the historical significance of the First World War armistice on Nov. 11, and in 1978, Veterans Day was returned permanently to its traditional date.

Hence, the Veterans Day National Ceremony is held each year on Nov. 11 at Arlington National Cemetery. At 11 a.m. Eastern Standard Time, a color guard made up of members from each branch of the military renders honors to America’s deceased veterans during a tradition-rich ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The president or his representative places a wreath at the tomb and a bugler sounds taps. The balance of the ceremony, including a parade of flags by veterans service organizations, takes place inside the memorial amphitheater, adjacent to the tomb.

On Oct. 7, 2016, President Barack Obama signed the Veterans Day Moment of Silence Act. The law requires that the president issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe a two-minute national moment of silence on Veterans Day at 1:11 p.m. Central Standard Time.



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Shawano VFW to celebrate new building with Veterans Day ribbon-cutting ceremony

By **KEVIN PASSON**
Editor-in-Chief

Shawano's Herbert E. McLaughlin VFW Post 2723 is planning for a Veterans Day grand opening of its new facility, following a groundbreaking ceremony held in May.

The new 4,000-square-foot post, at 810 Olson St., is anticipated to be completed by Nov. 11 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at noon that day to mark the occasion.

The new, modern building will replace the VFW's longtime home, providing a more accessible and spacious environment for local veterans.

The existing VFW building, 202 W. Lieg Ave., is listed for sale for \$170,000. It includes 2,697 square feet and is zoned residential.

The project has been in the planning and fundraising stages for several months, with the goal of better serving the needs of the area's veteran community.

The post is named for Army Air Forces Pvt. Herbert E. McLaughlin, 31, of Shawano, who was killed in the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

His remains were finally identified Dec. 17, 2024.

McLaughlin's name is recorded in the Courts of the Missing at the Punchbowl, along with the others who are missing from WWII. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

McLaughlin's remains were returned to Shawano this summer, and he was buried at Woodlawn Cemetery on Aug. 9.



Shawano VFW Post 2723 will host a grand opening and ribbon cutting for its new building at noon Nov. 11. The new building is located at 810 Olson St.

GREG MELLIS | NEW MEDIA

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Vets tell of time in Vietnam, Middle East

Behrend, Francois couldn't wait to get away from home

By NATHAN BIRR
Correspondent

David Behrend, of Morgan, joined the Navy in 1971 while a sophomore in a Michigan high school. Immediately after graduation, he went to basic training in San Diego.

“When I was 16 years old, I talked with the Navy recruiter and joined while still in high school,” Behrend said. “I couldn’t get away from home fast enough, but I had to wait till after my graduation from Powers-Spalding High School before I attended basic training.”

After training in California and at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois, Behrend was assigned to the USS Benjamin Stoddert (DDG-22). The ship was the 21st Charles F. Adams-class guided missile destroyer, commissioned in 1964.

“This ship had just about everything,” Behrend said. “We had guided missiles, rockets, torpedoes, depth chargers, gun batteries, and we were at times equipped with nuclear warheads.”

Behrend took the advice of family members who

had served in the military and did not volunteer for any job but simply took whatever job assigned to him.

“Looking back now, I wish that I would’ve picked my job instead of having it assigned to me,” Behrend said.

Behrend was assigned to the ship's boiler room.

"In 1972, I was just weeks out of training and placed on the DDG-22, and we set sail to Vietnam," Behrend said.

Soon after their arrival on the coast of Vietnam, while just a few miles away from the demilitarized zone, they came under fire from Vietcong artillery.

"The Vietcong had artillery near the shoreline and would fire rounds that left streaks of blue powder in the sky to trace their shots," Behrend. "They would usually miss by many hundreds of yards, but to our surprise, they actually hit us."

Behrend's ship was struck in the hull a few feet above the waterline. The projectile entered at an angle, leaving a hole 6 feet in diameter.

“The path that the

projectile took through the ship was just inches away from penetrating the

ammunition stores, gun battery controls, fuel tank and boiler room,” Behrend said. “It went through the

cooling water reservoir and stopped while pushing a dent in the fuel tank.

“It could have been the

end of all us; it was a matter of inches."

Behrend finished his time with the Navy as a petty officer 1st class (E-6) and joined the Coast Guard in 1991. During the Persian Gulf War, his unit patrolled the Port of Dammam, Saudi Arabia, in a Kevlar hulled 22-foot-long Boston Whaler.

"The Kevlar lined boats could take over 2,000 rounds of small arms fire before they would take on water," Behrend said. "They had twin 275-hp motors, and it got cold riding in those fast boats. On a 70-degree day, we would wear our winter gear."

Behrend is thankful for the winter combat uniforms his unit mistakenly received.

"Our unit got the wrong uniforms," Behrend said. "We were issued clothing for the North Pole by mistake."

Behrend comes from a long line of military service. His father served in the Navy during World War II, and his grandfather served in the Army during the Spanish-American war of 1899. Behrend has many uncles, cousins, siblings, nephews and nieces, as well as grandchildren who have served their country in uniform.

After 26 years of military service, Behrend

STORIES, CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

David Behrend, of Morgan, stands in front of a memorial for military veterans. Behrend served in the Navy and Coast Guard for a total of 26 years.

NATHAN BIRR

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Event honors Vietnam vets



A couple of Vietnam veterans are recognized during the Headstones event Sept. 20 at Woodlawn Cemetery in Shawano. Presented by the Shawano County Historical Society and the Shawano Parks and Recreation Department, the program included stories at the gravesites of four local men whose lives ended because of the Vietnam War. The 2025 program was the last in a multiyear endeavor to honor the lives of local veterans from the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

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STORIES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

moved to Green Bay with his wife, Virginia, and worked as a technical consultant for area hospitals. Currently, Behrend serves as a district supervisor for Oconto County.

Riley Francois
Riley Francois, of Gillett, joined the Army in 2013 almost a year after graduating from Gillett High School.

“I made the decision to join the Army, because I needed to get away from home as fast as possible,” Francois said. “My life was going down a bad path; I was running with the wrong crowd and needed to put some distance between us.”

Within weeks of talking with a recruiter, Francois was at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, completing basic training.

“When I spoke to the recruiter I picked my job in the Army, which was a forward observer for an artillery unit,” Francois said. “We call in targets from the ground within our eyesight and help guide howitzers, mortars and airstrikes to that target.”

After completing training, Francois was stationed at Camp Casey, Korea, for 20 months and then finished the remainder of his service contract in the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, garrisoned at Fort Riley, Kansas.

Francois deployed to

Kuwait, Jordan, Iraq, and Afghanistan as a specialist/corporal (E-4). His experiences taught him that true character lies in deeds, not looks.

“Some of the greatest people that I have ever met are covered in tattoos and look mean,” Francois said. “But they’re good men. I’ve seen them put their lives in danger time and again to protect children in the Middle East.”

Francois recalls times of frustration while serving overseas.

“The hoops that we had to jump through just to engage the enemy with artillery were ridiculous,” Francois said. “Many soldiers died because of the flawed rules of engagement under the Obama administration. Something that could have been settled with one of our bombs had to be handled with a team of guys going in.”

Francois also comes from a family with military history. His grandfather, Ron Temple, joined the Army after graduating from Gillett High School, and then he served as a truck driver in 8th Army while in Korea during the 1960s. Francois’s younger brother, Tristan, also joined the Army after high school, serving as a diesel mechanic while stationed in Korea.

After four years of



STORIES, CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 Spc. Riley Francois, of Gillett, poses for a selfie while deployed in combat in the Middle East.

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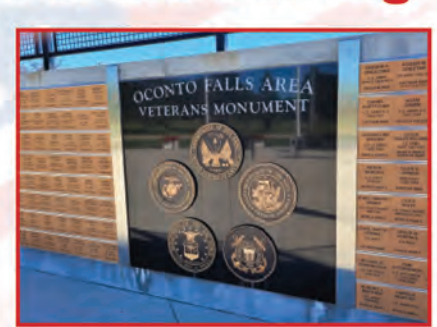
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Residents encouraged to attend community, school events to honor veterans

The Allied Vets Council will hold a Veterans Day program at 11 a.m. Nov. 11 at the Shawano County Courthouse, 311 N. Main St.

The ceremony will begin with the sounding of the bells and fire whistle.

Veteran Dennis Bohm will greet those who gather, and the Rev. Andrew Zobel, senior pastor at St. James Lutheran Church, will offer the invocation.

Paul Pionke, retired master sergeant with the U.S. Air Force and head of the Shawano County Veterans Service Office, will lead the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by Patty Ainsworth singing the national anthem.

Bohm will introduce the main speaker, Richard Kucksdorf, retired colonel with the U.S. Army Reserves.

Bohm and Pionke will recite the names of deceased veterans, followed by the presentation of a wreath by members of the James Lutz family in memory of their father.

VVA Chapter 206, commanded by Phil Nelson, will offer a rifle volley, and taps will be played by Brent Buettner and

company.

Zobel will offer the benediction, and Bohm will have closing remarks.

In case of rain, the program will be held inside Shawano Ambulance Service.

The Allied Vets Council includes VFW Post 2723, DAV Chapter 53, AMVETS Post 10, VVA Chapter 206 and American Legion Post 117.

Pulaski

The Pulaski Area Historical Society invites the community to a special “Meet the Veterans Day” program from 1-3 p.m. Nov. 8 at the Pulaski Museum, 129 W. Pulaski St.

The event is free and open to the public.

This event will feature a panel of veterans sharing their stories, experiences and perspectives. Community members, young and old, are encouraged to attend, ask questions and take the opportunity to learn directly from those who have served.

“Meet the Veterans Day” is held close to Veterans Day as a way for the community to listen, learn and say thank you to local heroes. Refreshments and snacks will be provided.

If you have questions about the event or would like to be considered for the veterans panel, contact Pam Janssen at 920-655-0116.

For information about the Pulaski Area Historical Society, visit www.pulaski-wihistory.com.

Oconto Falls

Staff and students at Oconto Falls High School, 210 N. Farm Road, Oconto Falls, invite veterans to their annual Veterans Day program Nov. 11.

There will be a small reception for veterans beginning at 8:30 a.m. in the OFHS Commons, followed by a high school assembly and program from 9-10 a.m. Veterans should feel free to bring family members or other guests to the program.

Veterans are asked to sign in upon arrival so each can be recognized for his or her service.

Following the high school program, there will be a short break followed by the combined Oconto Falls Elementary School and Abrams Elementary School Veterans Day concert, which will be held at 10:30 a.m. at Oconto Falls Elementary School.

STORIES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

military service, Francois moved back to northeast Wisconsin in 2016 and attended a local technical college. Francois works for a utility company and enjoys spending time with his wife, Samantha, and their 2-year-old daughter.

Connor Iverson

Connor Iverson, of Oconto Falls, joined the Marines in 2015 soon after graduating from Oconto Falls High School.

“I wasn’t interested in college right out of high school,” Iverson said. “So, I followed the example of my Uncle Bart who served in the Marines in Desert Storm.”

Iverson went to Camp Pendleton in San Diego for basic training, followed by specialized training at the Marine base in Twenty-nine Palms.

“The job that I picked in the Marines was a ground radio repairman,” Iverson said. “We oversaw all the portable and vehicular communication systems for our battalion.”

Iverson was stationed in Okinawa, Japan, before being deployed as sergeant (E-5) to Camp Shorabak, Afghanistan, with the 5th Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division. The unit was responsible for a battery of HIMARS missiles.

“Our base would receive small arms fire from the enemy often,” Iverson said. “Under the rules of



Sgt. Connor Iverson, of Oconto Falls, poses for a picture with his unit while deployed at Camp Shorabak, Afghanistan.

CONTRIBUTED

engagement, we couldn’t return fire until we were shot at, so sometimes the enemy got close.”

After five years of military service, Iverson moved back to Oconto Falls in 2020 to work with his brother in the grocery business. During that time, the U.S. military made a hasty withdrawal from

Afghanistan, one Iverson is disappointed with.

“The withdrawal under the Biden administration was heartbreaking,” Iverson said. “The Taliban now lives where I used to sleep. It’s sickening, but I’m proud to have served my country.”

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Langsten giving back as Legion Post commander

By GREG SEUBERT
Correspondent

“All over the planet.” That’s where Dr. Robert Langsten said the U.S. Air Force sent him after the Tigerton native enlisted as a college student at the University of Minnesota in the 1980s.

Nearly 40 years later, he’s back in Tigerton and is currently the commander of American Legion Post 239.

Langsten, 60, served in the military for 26 1/2 years before retiring in July 2016 as a U.S. Air Force Dental Corps officer and advanced general dentist.

“I enlisted in November 1986,” he said. “My father was drafted, and we had another (family member) serve. I was interested, and they offered residency and training programs.

“I was a commander for 12 years. I started off as a dentist, and then I did a bunch of surgical fellowships. I started at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Nebraska, and went to Patrick Air Force Base in Cape Canaveral (Florida). Then I went to Guam and on multiple humanitarian missions. From there, I went to Howard Air Force Base in Panama. From there, I went to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio,



Robert Langsten has served as commander of American Legion Post 239 in Tigerton since May. PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT LANGSTEN

Texas.”

Langsten was later deployed to Iraq twice.

“I flew critically injured patients and worked on them,” he said.

Langsten grew up in Tigerton before his family moved to the Milwaukee suburb of West Allis.

“My father got a job as a diesel mechanic in Milwaukee, so we moved from Tigerton to West Allis where I went to middle school and high school,” he said.

Langsten eventually moved back to his original hometown.

“We have a family farm there,” he said. “My

mother resides on the farm, and I wanted to come back home.”

He has served as Post 239’s commander since May.

“I was there for five years, and they were kind of looking at me,” Langsten said. “The outgoing commander had been there awhile, and there was an older gentleman who’s been there for 50 years, and he said, ‘We want you to be the commander.’

“I wanted to give back, and I wanted to make sure I was the right fit. I really

LANGSTEN,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



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Robert Langsten removes a bullet from a patient. PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT LANGSTEN

LANGSTEN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

feel that it's important to give back. The military utilized me for my skills, but they also provided me with a lot of valuable skills that I would have never had. I felt like I needed to give back to the community."

Post 239 representatives will be on hand for a POW/MIA ceremony on Veterans Day at Tigerton High School.

"A lot," Langsten said when asked what Veterans Day means to him. "It's a way of the community thanking me for my service. It's a way of me giving back to the community. It should be something that everybody appreciates. Sometimes, I don't think the American public realizes what some of those people went through."

American Legion and Veterans of Foreign War posts and their auxiliaries are essential to small communities like Tigerton, according to Langsten.

"They're a sign of community pride," he said. "We have a lot of people who have served in the Tigerton area. Not all of them were career (veterans), but they were drafted. Our post has a lot of Vietnam veterans who went through some pretty hellacious stuff. It's a nice way for them to get together. We also give back. We do the Memorial Day address. We do Veterans Day at the school. We do Fourth of July activities."

"It's a good way for them to put on their uniform and talk about their experience with the military," he continued. "If nothing else, it's community activity. It's camaraderie. It's friendship. It's, 'Hey, we appreciate what you did.'"



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