

WINTER 2021

Greetings,

I cannot believe how fast the time goes, 2022 is just around the corner believe it or not. With that said, as many of you know Laurie Anderson the Administrative Assistant here at the Polk County Veterans Office will be retiring on January 10, 2022. She surely will be missed, and I cannot say thank you enough to her for all she has done for the Veterans while working in the Veterans Service Office.

As far as the office goes, we will have some changes once we replace Laurie's Position. So please be patient with our office during the training and transition of a new staff person. The best number to reach me is my work cellphone at 218 280 5506. Please use this number if you are unable to reach me at the Crookston Office as I spend a lot of time during the week at different locations.

The office has had some issues with our telephone system. If we have not gotten back to you in a day or two please call again and leave your phone number with us if we do not answer. Spelling the last name of the veteran is so helpful to us.

There are times when a veteran passes away that the family has no clue as to where their discharge papers are. Please let your family know where to find them as it is taking months and months to receive anything from St. Louis Personnel Records Center.

We are excited to announce that we planning to have our annual Veterans Benefit Fair again on April 1, 2022 at the Crookston National Guard Armory from 10 a.m. to 2p.m. So please mark your calendars. There will more information in the next newsletter.

We are looking for volunteers to drive the DAV van to take our Veterans to scheduled doctor appointments. You *do not have* to be a veteran to drive and male and female drivers are welcomed. Please call the office for more information. The van program depends on our volunteers to keep this program going. The van is located in Crookston and the pick-up area is within fifty miles of Crookston. The normal routes are to Bemidji, Grand Forks and Fargo VA. The patient must have a VA appointment or care in the community appointment okayed by the VA. I would like to take the time to thank the volunteer drivers that have been driving for the VA, we appreciate you very much.

If you need a ride for a VA scheduled appointment you need to call 1-855-277-8787 to schedule a ride with Dan Woods.

Take care and have some Happy Holidays,

Let it snow

Kuz Ellson
Laurie

Seasons come and seasons go and pretty soon 45 years go by and you wonder where did the time go? Many of you may not know that I am going to be retiring on January 10, 2022. Since I have interviewed so many veterans over the years with their military stories, Kurt thought I needed to write my story.

Below, I would like to give you a little history about myself;

I was born in Thief River Falls, MN, Lauren (Laurie) Pokrzywinski. When I was two and half years old my family moved to Huot, MN. I grew up on a farm, milked cows by hand and had various other chores as we raised many animals.



The neighborhood kids along with my sister and myself would walk through waist high snow to get to the hills that surrounded our farm. Robert Larson a dear friend and neighbor would give us a ride up the hill with his snowmobile, after we went down on a Toboggan. Did I mention it was a huge hill or it seemed to be when I was a kid. I drive by there now and those memories come flooding back to me.

Huot, at one time was a thriving community known for the 1863 Treaty of Old Crossing. The park was our playground. In the summer us kids would go there almost every evening after chores were done. We used to swing on a rope from one of the trees on a hill, it was so much fun. That was until my sister Lana broke her arm and my friend Roseann broke her leg. That was the end of that! Many times us kids would then walk down to the Huot store where Emma Huot had penny candy and freezes, we thought we were pretty special. The building is still there today and used by one of Emma's daughters.

In August of each year the Chautauqua (French Festival) is held at the Huot County Park.

If you have not attended the French Festival you should check it out. It has history, music, Square Dancers, food, vendors, Teepees and Native American Culture. Us kids would play around the Memorial Statue of which was erected on June 25, 1933 as a memorial to the 1863 Treaty of Old Crossing.



I began my education in a one room country school house in Louisville Twp., Red Lake County through the fourth grade, I only had a block to walk down hill, it was only up-hill on the way home! As you can see I



used most of the alphabet to spell my maiden last name. I did not have a hard

time spelling it but my teachers sure did. 😊 My favorite subjects were recess and lunch, just kidding, I loved

school. My dog would periodically follow me to school and we would see the dog through the school window run off with the kids boots that were left on the porch. I had to go outside and retrieve them and sometimes I

choose not to go back to school right away. That was back in the day when a ruler could touch the top of

your hand if you know what I mean. 😞 After the country school was closed, I then went on to finish school

in Red Lake Falls, MN and graduated from Lafayette High School in 1974.

December 27, 1976 was my first day at Polk County in the Auditor's Office. At that time, Jack Schmalenberg hired me and Martin Vanseth, was the Auditor-Administrator. Imagine going back 45 years and your typewriter

and adding machine were manuals. I believe they are now located at the Polk County Museum. 🤖 Everything was done by hand back then as there were no computers at that time. I had a few different posi-

tions in the Auditor's Office.

Eventually the Auditor-Treasurer was a combined office and I worked under Lawrence Fontaine and Jerry Amiot. The Administrator's Office became a separate office shortly after Martin Vanseth passed away. I wore many hats but my primary work was in the areas of Property and Elections.

December, 2010, Marilyn Juvrud retired from the Veterans Office. I applied for her position and was fortunate to be hired. Les Goodwin was the CVSO at the time. Les, sadly passed away July 11, 2016. November 2016, Kurt Ellefson was hired as the new CVSO.

A lot of various up-dating has taken place in the CVSO office with new Programs & Technology. It has been very busy which is good to see that Veterans are hearing about our office. I may volunteer to help out if needed with any projects Kurt may have, including the Veterans Fair in April.



I have a camper at Lake of the Woods and plan to spend more time there and hope to go fishing more often. With winter coming upon us, I am excited to get out on the ice and do some winter fishing!!

I have one son, Jared who is Production Manager at the grain elevator in East Grand Forks. He likes to Fish & Hunt and he has a 1979, Cutlass Supreme that he likes to tinker with.



In September 2011 I had my first International German student, Kristen Stubner, who came to live with me for about a year. He was one of the last people that were able to fly into the US, after the bombing of the twin towers. I enjoyed him very much and he was very involved in school. His parents invited me to Germany for three weeks the next year and that was an awesome trip. They came to visit me twice and I was able to take them to a few states to do some sightseeing.

Simon Eichinger was my second German student. He was so much fun, a great sense of humor, liked to cook and try different foods as did Kristen. He pushed himself to try many different sports and other school functions. In Germany, sports are not part of the school curriculum, one has to join a club in order to play. He has returned two different times and keeps in contact by email or face time.

If you read my story about Arthur C. Olson in one of the prior Newsletters, he was a guard at the Nuremburg Trials; Simon was with me during that interview. Simon was so interested as this happened in his country where they do not talk about it. Simon was able to ask questions of someone that was there from the US which gave him much insight.

I have three sisters Lana Caillier, Donna Koralewski & Delores Gruhot (Donna & Delores are twins) who all live in the area and one brother, Dennis Pokrzywinski who lives in Harvest, Alabama. He was stationed at Red Stone Arsenal and met his wife there. Sadly she passed away in August and I was very fortunate to spend time with the family for two weeks this last summer.

Retiring is bitter-sweet, I have loved every minute in the office, meeting new veterans and their families. I have made many friendships and will miss each and everyone of you.

I am a member of AFRAN and a Life Member of both the VFW and DAV Auxiliary's.

Everyone asks what am I going to do when I retire: Here are a few pictures of my hobbies.





VETERANS SPOTLIGHT

I am happy to announce **Clayton West** in the Veterans spotlight, who is from Fertile, MN.

Clayton was born on a small farm near Fertile, Minnesota.

My earliest memory is walking a mile and a half to a small, one-room country school where the teacher had to teach all eight grades. When I was done with that I started High school. My favorite subjects were Geography and American History. I did not like math at all.

During World War II, I was in high school. They did not even offer some of the classes at that time because of the shortage of teachers. I remember we were on the farm. It was hard to get tires for our vehicles: tractor, cars, and pickup. Of course, everything was rationed at that time. I do remember that rationing. It upset my folks quite a lot but it never had too much to do with me at the time. Everyone was in the same boat so they didn't whine about it.

I was still on the farm when I received my draft letter in the mailbox for the Korean War. "Your friends and neighbors" (laughter). That's how it read. It was fine, I knew it was going to come sooner or later. I guess I was very fortunate that I was as young as I was. If I had enlisted I could have gotten into some very serious fighting there but since I got in so very late I was able to avoid a lot of it.

I was now in the Army. My basic training was at Fort Riley, Kansas. My first impression was to keep my mouth shut and do as I was told (laughter). That worked out fine, I went through sixteen weeks of basic infantry training.

After my basic I was thinking I was ready to be deployed to Korea, but no. I got ten weeks of wheeled vehicle mechanics school at Fort Riley. That set me back another ten weeks. Keep this in mind, A lot of things happened that were very strange and probably ended up saving my life. Of course, I don't know but it feels that way.

I got on the *U.S.S. The Marine Phoenix* in San Francisco. We were 1,100 miles beyond Hawaii and the ship broke down. We were just drifting around for a long time. You've got to remember now this time thing meant a lot. A tugboat came along and pulled us back to Hawaii. That took eleven days. We went one hundred miles a day. When we got to Hawaii again we changed to another ship: *The General W.M. Black*. That was a really big ship. I actually went home in that same ship after the war was over. I never did fly to any of these places. In fact, I spent a whole thirty days on my chow card going there, because of how long it took (laughter). Then I eventually did get to Japan.

My memories of Japan were really strange. It wasn't that long, you know, from the time that we were hostile with Japan. So when I came there, there were still a lot of bullet holes at the port in their long steel buildings. I thought, "Well, I'm glad that it's over, here anyway."

The Japanese were very polite with us. They were very good. I spent a lot of time in Japan. I thought I was going to go right to Korea from Japan because that's what they did. But they assigned me to go to an island called Etajima. It used to be the Japanese naval academy. It was there that I had eight weeks of track vehicle mechanics school. In other words, working on tanks.

Etajima, was beautiful. Oh, I'd give the world if I could go back there again. It was just so beautiful. Probably one of the prettiest places I've ever been to, I think. It had a little village there. I never went to the village because a lot of bad things happened around there. But where we stayed it was wonderful.

When I was there, if you can believe this was during the war in Korea, on a weekend we got to go on a LST (Landing Ship Tank.) And we went to Hiroshima. I was so surprised when we went. This is during the time I was at track vehicle school. I remember they said, "Nothing will ever grow after the nuclear attack." Wrong answer. Everything was beautiful.

The trees were beautiful, the buildings had all been built up. It was a very pretty city when I got there. You have to remember that this was only seven years later. The Japanese can work like nobody you ever saw. They go 24/7 all the time. I was very impressed with the Japanese. I didn't mess around with them at all but they seemed like they were very respectful. They did try to sell you a lot of stuff, you know, like cameras and stuff like that. I got used to that in a hurry.

When we arrived in Korea, we came into Pusan (nka Busan) it was way in the south. The towns and villages looked awful. I've seen them now and they're all built up. I can't believe it. Then they only had these little tin roof shacks and people were hungry. It wasn't a good thing to see.

We took a train north and I remember the wooden seats on the train. We already were armed, at that time, with live rounds. We'd take turns and stand between the cars and see that everything was okay.

This is going to sound very strange to you but the closest I ever came to losing my life was with a friendly situation. We were on line. Then the 1st Marines were going to come in there and we were going to exchange. This was right at the very end of the war. It had been raining and it was very muddy. Later on I got to be a truck driver, hauling ammo and whatever other supplies they needed. Anyway, we were kind of holding up and there was a lot of fighting going on. The sky was lit up with flares and there were multiple rocket launchers going off. They were using heavy stuff against us. We were supposed to move out, and I mean really out. There was an officer, I believe he was a Major. He said, "The road is blocked up there and we can't get it open. Do you think you can get your ammo truck out of here?" It was dark but because of the flare it was really light. I looked at him and I said, "Yes, sir. I think I can." And then he said, "Well go." Then I said, "Well, sir, how far am I supposed to go?" Nobody had left yet and I didn't know where I was going. I had six guys in the truck plus it was pulling a trailer. All he said to me was, "Go far as far as you want. Just get that ammo truck the hell out of here." I started driving. I drove maybe three-quarters of a mile on this one road and then it kind of curved and sort of went up the hill gradually. It was then that I stopped because I thought, "I need to wait for my outfit". I was the only one there. The Chinese had a weapon called a 240, it was a 240mm I'd imagine. When I was standing there I heard the thump of the 240 from way far away but then it got closer. And it got closer. And then I thought, "Well my mother didn't raise anyone stupid enough to stand by an ammo truck." So I shouldered my rifle and I walked about 200 yards to get away from the truck. All of a sudden somebody yelled at me. I didn't understand what he had said. I stopped and I took one more step and I heard "click-click" and I thought, "Whoa." Well now what do I do? I can't turn around and run because that wouldn't be a very good idea. I can't take another step forward, so what do I do? Out of the clear blue I yelled real loud, "American."

When I did that, a Turkish soldier came out. We were within handshaking distance. He talked and I talked and neither of us understood the other one. He turned around I went back up to my truck and waited for my unit.

I was Mike Company of the 14th Regiment in the 25th Division. That was a heavy weapons company. We had 81mm mortars, where as the light infantry had 60mms. We had 75 recoilless and later on we even had a 105 recoilless that was mounted right on a Jeep. They had everything smaller because they had to carry it. We could move ours around. The heavy weapons company was better because there wasn't nearly as much marching and walking, for me especially when I got to be a truck driver there. I was only pinned down twice I guess. The one time was the Turkish incident. The other time we were pinned down for quite a while. That was only from artillery. I was never in combat with small arms. Not at all like you see in the movies.

I am not sure what hill we were on because I didn't really care, you know? You're just there. ELKO, CARSON, and VEGAS were the three hills that we were defending. Sometime while the war was still on we had a meeting and they said that we probably would be attacking Pork Chop. That got canceled for some reason. I think it was getting so close to a truce that they didn't want to risk it. They were having problems with *Syngman Rhee* in South Korea. He was not signing what he was supposed to be signing. He kept dragging his feet. We could have had it ended earlier and a lot of those guys would not have gotten killed.

I didn't have much respect for him. It ended that way anyway so why he was dragging his feet? I don't know. Well of course, I don't know because all I was at that time was a truck driver.

After the War I decided to leave the military. Had I decided to stay in, I wanted to be a warrant officer. I liked that position. You rated a salute but a warrant officer wasn't called anything but Mister. You had your junior and senior warrant officers. They worked as RSOs or Regimental Supply Officers quite a bit so I would have had plenty of training on that. But I wanted to get out. I had a girlfriend at the time.

This is an interesting story. When I left Fort Riley Kansas, I went to the bus station to get tickets to go to Minneapolis. We got a little break before we were to be shipped out. We could go home. I was just getting my ticket and then somebody tapped me on my shoulder. He said, "You're going to Minneapolis?" I said, "Yeah." He goes on and says, "Well I'm going to go to Minneapolis but I've got my car here. Would you want to share driving with me?" I had my money out already to get my ticket. I put my billfold back in my pocket and I said, "sure, let's do it." So we were driving back. Once we got close to the city he said, "I have a girlfriend in the Swedish Hospital Nursing School. Would you mind if we stop there?" I said, "This is your car we can stop wherever you want." He said, "I might even be able to get you a date." So in a little time I sat in the car and here came two very nice girls. They were very pretty, and I thought, "Wow, this is good." I had one date with this one girl and when I walked her back to her door there at the nursing school, I kissed her goodnight and I said, "Thank you for this date." She goes, "would you like me to write to you?" and I said, "Wow, yes. I sure would like that." So she wrote all the time I was in Japan and quite a while when I was in Korea. But then, of course, I got the Dear John letter saying that she had met someone else. Then she said in one of her letters, "There's three gals and one of them would write to you if you want them to." I replied with, "Well, sure." She said, "Well I'll send you a picture." She sent me a picture of these three nice looking gals. That was after the war. I really liked one of the gals, she was really cute. I wrote back, "I want that one to write to me." Low and behold, as soon as I got to Minneapolis I went to the door and she met me there. I had my uniform on and I suppose I looked pretty sharp. We had a date and then one more, and more and more, and finally we got engaged and after a year and a half we got married. Then we hit our 60th Anniversary. It was really something. We had this big room and we had all the families there. I think there was about twenty-four people there. They wanted me to make a speech. I didn't want to make any speech. But, I told them about the ticket story and I said, "If I had gotten that ticket, none of you guys would have been here." And I said, "Wow, not only would you not have been here, you would never have been." Isn't that something.

We have three children, seven grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and most recently a great great grandson.

After the war I went back to the farm for a little bit over the summer and moved to Minneapolis. I lived there for two years and we were married during that time. Then we lived in Burbank, CA for seven and a half years and then moved back to the farm again.

While we lived in Burbank I delivered milk door to door. It was interesting that I delivered to Andy Griffith but I really didn't get to see him but one time. I delivered to Tennessee Ernie Ford and Eldo Ray (Actor) who became very good friends to my wife and myself.

Oh yeah, I forgot a part of a segment from Korea. When we left Pusan to come back, another fellow and I were standing alongside the railing of the ship. It was foggier than the Dickens, and I said, "Boy, they're meeting awfully close." I had just said that when this Chinese freighter hit us. I saw the whole underside of the front end of their ship, because we were so much bigger than they were. They made a hole in our ship. The Japanese were going down on their little swing kind of thing and were welding it for ten days. So I had more sea time than anybody. Definitely anybody in the Army I think. At least I got home then and everything was good. When I see a cruise ship and people ask, "Would you like to get on a cruise ship?" I go, "NO" (laughter). I've been cruising enough on ships.

Would, I recommend Military Service for our young people, Absolutely. I think it would be very good for everybody. You learn you're not the only person in the world. You learn that what you think you're good at, you're not good at all.

“What lessons should historians and the public take from the Korean War?”

Well, that's a difficult question. It's sort of a political question and I don't know. I suppose we did cut down on communism and I assume that's why we were there. I don't know what the public should think. I don't like it when they call it a police action or conflict. It wasn't a conflict. Conflict is when you're throwing snowballs at each other. This was a war where we lost 30,000+ young men. If that isn't a war, what is? Some of these newspapers make me angry when they have obituaries on somebody my age and they say, “He was in the Korean Conflict.” I've even called them and said, “Get that 'conflict' out of your mind. It wasn't a conflict.

I get up in the morning and say, “Of course, it's not a perfect world. But live with and try to make it better.” the challenge is out there. Stop complaining and be up to the Challenge!!!



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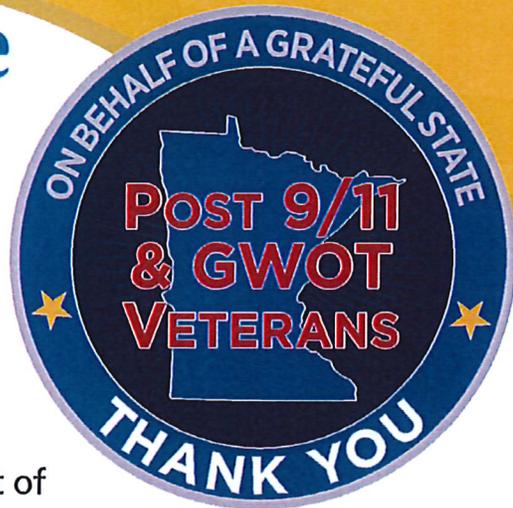
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Questions? Contact your local Outreach Educator:
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Commemorative Coin available to GWOT Veterans

In recognition of the 20th Anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and subsequent Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs has created a commemorative coin as an expression of appreciation to Minnesota Veterans who have served since that fateful day. These coins are a limited edition and available for a short time.



Minnesota GWOT Veterans are invited to register for this **free** coin by visiting: <https://bit.ly/GWOTvetcoin>.

Coins will be distributed by County Veterans Services Officers.



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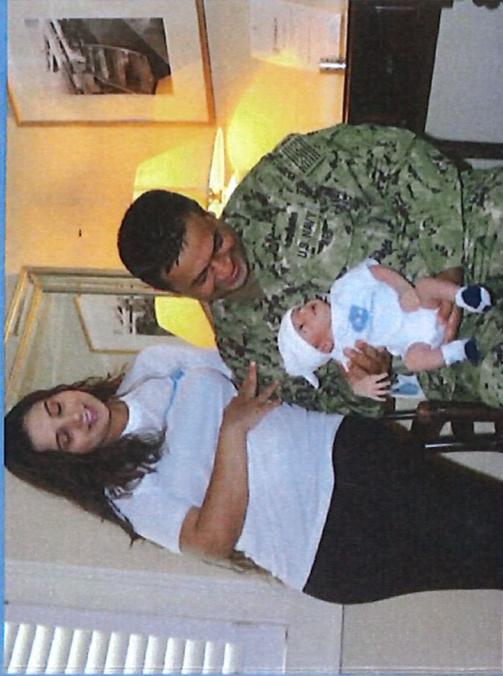
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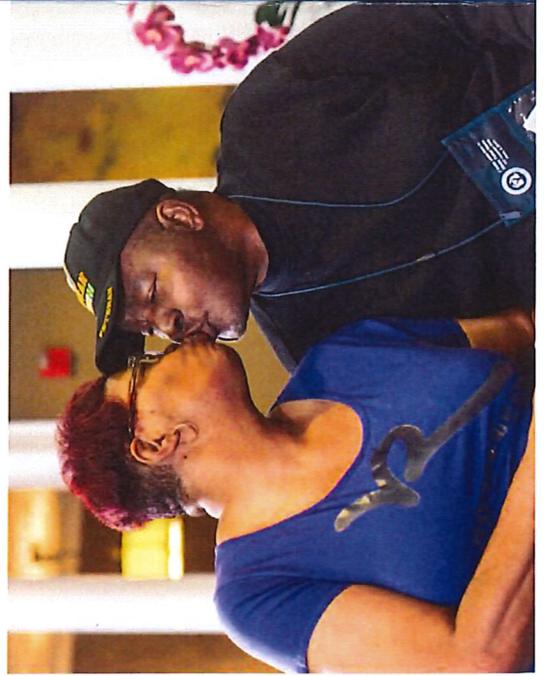


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Fall Newsletter

2021

The spring newsletter stated that the cold weather was behind us, now we are looking at it coming back. If we live in Minnesota, we have to deal with it or be a snow bird. We have enjoyed our summer and fall events. Here are the highlights:

Fishing: We got to take 26 veterans to Lake of the Woods for 4 days, 3 nights of great fishing. Granted it was very hot that week, (100 degrees) nevertheless our Veterans did a great job of catching fish. With that many people, there was a ton of comradery. We appreciate Humana being our sponsor for the event.

Goose Hunting: Our youth group hunt was a success also. A total of 68 geese plus 4 ducks were harvested. The weather has been kind to us for our hunts. They had a fun filled day. Our sponsors for that are Border Bank, Sportsman Club, both from Middle River and Red Lake Electric Trust (operation round up).

DAV Chapter #7 sponsored our "Disabled Veterans Goose Hunt", 18 hunters from all over Minnesota managed to bag 41 birds. The participants enjoyed the comradery and getting out into the fields and fresh air.

Deer Hunting: We got a nice rain just before deer hunting started making the fields pretty slick. It was great that we were able to use side by side off road vehicles. Once again, all the hunters were able to fill their tags and had some venison to take home. Our volunteers were busy cutting up meat. NW MN DAV Chapter 41 was our sponsor.

We were sad to say that we had to cancel our Pheasant Hunting trip to South Dakota this year. The Combat Motorcycle Veterans Association (CMVA) and the Middle River Legion Riders visited with us also. It is always nice to be able to promote our organization with others who give to the veterans.

One major project was installing Solar Power on our building in Middle River. We made contact with NW RSDP (Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships) administered locally by U of MN Crookston. This contact resulted in generating local community interest and support. It was a huge undertaking with the "power on" November 1st.

We have been gifted by having so many volunteers with our events. We are always fund raising and trying to accommodate our guests. More deer stands, goose blinds or fishing tackle, we are on it.

The pictures and updates are going on to our website. Please check it out and sign up for a fun filled no expense outdoor adventure. You can print applications from the "Events" page on our website. mrveteransoutdoors.com

To all our Veterans "Thank you for your Service."



EVENT SCHEDULE

AS OF NOV 20TH, 2021

NORSKIES HOCKEY In Thief River Falls at Engelstad Arena, Sponsored by: **NOR-SKIDS FOUNDATION** for **Veterans and their family members**. Tickets and coupons for the concession stand will be furnished.

Dec 11th, 2021 – NORSKIES vs KAM RIVER at 7:30 PM

Feb 12th, 2022 – NORSKIES vs WISCONSIN at 7:30 PM

Call: Wayne at 218-686-9114 to make a reservation for these games.

ICE FISHING On Lake of the Woods

Men's Fishing Day is January 31st, 2022

Ladies Fishing Day is February 7th, 2022

To apply for one of these fishing adventures please submit an application at least 20 days prior to the event. An application can be printed from the link on the "SCHEDULE" page of our website.

View our website MRveteransoutdoors.com for updates



Office Hours

8:00 am –4:30 pm Monday through Friday
Crookston Office 218-281-3066

Every Wednesday

Fosston Civic Center, Fosston

215 1st St. E

(218-280-5506)

9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Bjella Building McIntosh (218-280-5506)

1:00 PM-3:30 PM

240 Cleveland Ave SW, McIntosh

Every Thursday and First and Third Tuesdays of the Month

Polk County Human Service Center (218-280-5506)

9:00 AM-3:30 PM

1424 Central Ave. NE, East Grand Forks, MN



Fax: 218-521-7982

Phone: 218-281-3066

Crookston MN 56716

612 Broadway St N, Room 241

Polk County Veterans Service Officer

Kurtis Ellertson