

BONGVHC

#2

SEPT/OCT/NOV

SIP & SUPPORT

American Legion
Auxiliary

VOLUNTEERS

**CRAFT NEW
EXHIBIT**

Built Pacific Rim Post
Office with incredible
posts from WWII

ANNUAL GALA:

**SALUTE
TO HEROES**

Join us, November
14th for an evening
you won't forget.

RICHARD I.
BONG

VETERANS
HISTORICAL
CENTER

Photo credit: Randy Freeman

OUR GOAL is to honor the memory and legacy of Major Richard I. Bong, America's "Ace of Aces"
To preserve and share the history of sacrifices from veterans of all branches of service.
To educate about the contributions and sacrifices made by veterans which ensure the freedoms enjoyed today.

23RD VETERAN NOW IN HOUSE AT THE BONG

New relationship with 23rd Veteran Organization

We are always looking for ways to support veterans, and programs for veterans, and we are excited to say 23rd Veteran is sharing some of our office space.

[We are proud to announce the arrival of Frances Wittenberg](#), and introduce her as the 23rd Veteran Events Manager.

Frances is a proud mother of three awesome children, a veteran, and an advocate for change. She brings a wealth of experience in leadership, community engagement, team collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. After serving in the U.S. Air Force for over 21 years, her involvement with the 23rd Veteran organization and her passion for supporting her community and fellow veterans will help strengthen our relationships throughout the Twin Ports.



23rd Veteran is a non-profit founded in 2025 by Marine Corps Veteran Mike Waldron. They strive to make a difference in helping other veterans find their hope and happiness through positive trigger reassociation and

training in a lifestyle that maintains a healthy level of baseline brain chemicals attributed to happiness.

Learn more about the good work 23rd Veteran does for vets: www.23rdveteran.org

ROOTS IN BLUE ROCKED

USAF professional musicians free concert in our museum

Monday July 22, 2024, Roots in Blue, the rock band part of USAF Band of MidAmericas graced the Bong Center with a night of rock and roll and outreach.

Not only filling our facility with incredible music, the Roots In Blue musicians were all about hanging out afterward and visiting with the veterans in the audience.

Nice to know our P-38 is perfect for hosting such an event, we hope to do it again soon!



23RD VETERAN 2024-2025 EVENTS:

New Veterans and Family Always Welcome

23rd Veteran Winter Gala - 6 Dec 2024

10th Annual Duluth Ruck Life -

31 May 2025 at Mont du Lac Resort

Twin Cities Ruck Life - 6 Sep 2025

Details email: info@23rdveteran.org

PIGS RIDE ENDS WITH DONATION TO BONG

End of August is a beautiful time to ride! The Superior Pigs logged over 200 miles with over 60 bikes and over 100 participants and donated nearly \$6,000 to veterans causes





EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,

JOHN GIDLEY

Hello Everyone!

The late fall arrival has brought with it a thankful mood. I am so thankful for the extended warm

weather we have experienced this fall as one of the many things to be thankful for here at the Richard I Bong Veterans Historical Center! Foremost, I am very thankful for our dedicated staff, volunteers and Board of Directors who have all contributed so greatly to our success this year.

I am also very grateful and thankful for the support of you, our extended Bong Center Family. The area community has been so supportive of us and our mission this past year and it has enabled us to continue to fulfill our mission. We have been so greatly blessed with generous sponsors and contributors throughout this past year that it warms my heart and fills it with appreciation for each and everyone of you!

To show our appreciation for your generosity we will continue to provide programming that bonds our amazing veterans and wonderful community! With your support we provide a hearty Thanksgiving meal to veterans and active duty families each year, a community picnic on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, Flag Day and Independence Day programming.

It has been a year full of good fortune for the Bong Center with the exciting partnership with Pacific Wrecks LLC and the discovery of the original "Marge" P-38 lightning in the Jungles of New Guinea to the many new exhibits and upgrades to our humble museum.

Thank you all and have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

John Gidley
Executive Director

Please join us for our 21st Annual Gala A Salute to Heroes, next Thursday, November 14th. This memorable evening, will honor Ray Klosowski and reveal more about our future.

More details available on our website:
bongcenter.org

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VETERANS DAY

Junior Volunteers take the lead

Saturday, November 9th

9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Our incredible Bong Center Jr. Volunteers will be presenting their Veterans Day artifact program all day.

RED CROSS THANKS OUR VOLUNTEERS

Minnesota Red Cross thanked the Richard I Bong Center's volunteers for their help with the Minnesota Red Cross 2024 Purple Up campaign. They provided a lunch and program for our volunteers.

The program was a presentation by Dr. Dokhanchi regarding the Geneva Conventions.



2 photos above: Jeff Kazel thanks our volunteers gathered in the classroom.

L - R in front of Marge: Dan E. Williams Exec. Director of the Minnesota Red Cross, John Gidley Director Bong Veterans Historical Center, Dr. Kahlil (Haji) Dokhanchi Professor & Dept. Chair Social Inquiry Department UW Superior, Professor & Dept. Chair Jeff Kazel Regional Director of the American Red Cross of Minnesota



SPOTLIGHT ON JR VOLUNTEER: DALLAS JONDREAU

Dallas Jondreau is a junior (on paper, but one conversation with him will assure you he is one of those rare "old souls") who has volunteered for the Bong Center for over a year and worked as a paid tour guide here at the center for 3 years.

Dallas was motivated to both volunteer and work here because "I had a interest in WWII and the staff and volunteers already working here were open about sharing their interests while letting me share what I know." He said his favorite ex-

hibit would have to be the firearms and his favorite part of his association with the Bong Center is "... meeting people from all over the world. Making connections and sharing passion for history."



VOLUNTEERS BUILD NEW PACIFIC THEATER POST OFFICE EXHIBIT

Special thanks to Peter Fiske, Bong Center staff member and other adult volunteers, our teen volunteers had fun creating a new Pacific Theater post office for our Pacific Theater area. With adult supervision, they learned history, planning, building skills, and teamwork. Stop by to see their great work soon!



OCTOBER , 2024 • LOSS OF A LEGENDARY WOMAN



Left: Gerry in her home and above a close up from a full family photo showing Gerry and her big brother Dick.

She lived every bit of her 99 years, mowed her own lawn until 98 and was unhappy when her privileges were revoked. Jerry (Bong) Fechtelkotter was an amazing person, and much missed by all here at the Richard I. Bong Veterans Historical Center.

Jerry was the daughter of Carl and Dora Bong and a lifelong resident of Poplar. Little sister of our Ace of Aces, Her memory of the "good old days" was strong and she regaled us with many stories about the family growing up, like when she was Marge's maid of honor at their wedding.

We are especially grateful that she was involved in the announcement of the exciting news about finding her brother's "Marge" plane in Papua New Guinea. She was thrilled with the discovery and being able to share that with her made the experience even more special for everyone involved in the expedition.

Jerry married Lyle J. Fechtelkotter on August 26, 1949. They celebrated fifty-six years of marriage before Lyle passed in 2005. Jerry was an elementary school teacher for almost 40 years almost all in Maple WI. She enjoyed teaching first graders to read and write and develop a love of books.

Jerry and Lyle raised registered beef cattle with their kids. She was an active member of her community her entire life. Volunteering for Peace Lutheran church, singing in the choir, and working with quilters. She and Lyle were members of the International Lions Pin Trading Club and travelled the world trading. This tiny dynamo was a skilled seamstress, painted, did woodworking, was a sports fan, was an avid reader, animal lover and gardener.

She gave life her all and her friends and family even more. She will be severely missed.

7TH ANNUAL FREE THANKSGIVING MEAL

November 28th • 11:00AM - 3:00PM Free for veterans, active military personnel and their loved ones.

Our 7th Annual Bong Center Thanksgiving is available: dine in, curbside or home delivery. All the details; your choice of serving times, and options for meals are available on [our website](#) and by calling guest services, 715-392-7151.

This meal wouldn't be possible without the hard work and generous contributions from the Superior Lions and the talented kitchen at Manitou Inn.

AMERICAN LEGION POST 435

AUXILIARY NEWS:

SIP & SUPPORT was a huge success! Lots of hard work was evident at the great event on Saturday October 12th. Special thanks to all the members, businesses who donated and vendors who attended. All of the funds raised went to the Douglas Co. Veterans Fund.



Meetings for both Legion and Auxiliary are second Tuesdays of every month at 7:00PM at Richard I. Bong Veterans Historical Center. **NEXT MEETING:** November 12th, 2024 7:00PM **New folks always welcome!**



These little men stood with our American Legion Post 435 with their Grandma while taking a break from a long trip.

Leland, Oliver and their Grandma learned how to stand respectfully during a flag ceremony and how to receive a flag.

SUMMER INTERNS IN THE ARCHIVES

Ava Carlson from UMD and Cathy Taylor from UWS worked in our archives



This summer Ava Carlson, from UM Duluth Museum Studies Program, worked on a variety of projects focused on archival work.

[Learn more about her experiences here.](#)

www.bongcenter.org/blog/deep-dive-into-the-archives



Cathy Taylor from UWS worked on several projects this summer. One major project was the exhibit about a WWII postmaster from Cloquet who volunteered to help set up much needed postal services in the Pacific Theater. [Read more about the exhibit in a guest post written by Cathy.](#)

www.bongcenter.org/blog/new-wwii-postal-service-exhibit/

JUNIOR VOLUNTEERS GET DOCENT BIN DONE

New Volunteer Opportunity



Our first docent bin is ready!! The junior volunteers have been hard at work gathering items and writing up descriptions for the WWI display. These bins will be used by our volunteers to provide pop-up displays in the museum gallery.

the collections. In this bin, visitors will learn about Otto Wermter, a WWI Army soldier and Great Lakes sailor.

The WWI bin contains uniform pieces, medals, and other items that were used during WWI. Each bin also includes a story from

Our dedicated Junior volunteer group have other docent bins in the works, including a WWII Marine Corps display and a WWII Pilot display.



BECOME A MEMBER TODAY • JOIN US!

HONOR & PRESERVE THE LEGACY OF VETERANS

Your membership support allows us to provide world-class exhibits, educational programming, and community outreach.



R.I Bong Veterans Center is a non-profit museum that serves as an important cultural and historical institution. We are dedicated to commemorating the sacrifices and contributions of individuals who have served in the armed forces.

We have six levels of membership with a variety of benefits, something to suit everyone. [Please see our membership page on our website](#) or talk to Guest Services.

If you select our membership of Staff Sargent & above you will enjoy free admission access to thousands of cultural institutions through NARM!

We joined the NARM association this fall to give our members this incredible opportunity to have free admission at other interesting locations.

[The NARM Association](#) is an extensive network of hundreds of cultural insti-

tutions across Bermuda, Canada, the Cayman Islands, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and the United States. It connects their memberships for unprecedented access to arts, science, history, botanical gardens, and more.

Digital Membership Cards

As part of our commitment to sustainable practices, we are offering a faster and greener way to deliver membership benefits to our Members.

Members who join or renew will receive a link to download their digital membership card, which provides a more efficient and convenient way to access membership information and benefits.

This environmentally-friendly approach supports our vision to connect people to history and reduces our environmental footprint. Please see our FAQ to answer many of your questions.



★ BECOME A ★
★ MEMBER ★
★ TODAY! ★

ALL MEMBERS ENJOY UNLIMITED
ADMISSIONS & MORE

Help ensure that future generations have access to resources and exhibits to educate them about the experiences of veterans.

Memberships above \$100 automatically include NARM, North American Reciprocal Museum Association, Member Benefits. NARM benefits include: over 1,000 museums, galleries, historical museums & societies, botanical gardens, children's museums, zoos & more! See NARM website for details.

Your digital membership card will come to your email, we can assist with any issues. If you want an additional physical card, please see guest services.

21ST ANNUAL

Salute to Heroes

RICHARD I.
BONG

VETERANS
HISTORICAL
CENTER

GALA 2024

November 14th, 2024 • Doors open at 5:30

The Garden Canal Park

[PURCHASE YOUR ENTRY HERE](#)

or call to purchase through Guest Services 715-392-7151

Both sets of doors will be open, for check in and coat check with plenty of seating available for our cocktail-style party.

This party starts immediately with a wide selection of chef-curated hors d'oeuvres. Meet and mingle with our esteemed guests. Enjoy a selection of fine wines graciously poured by Keyport Liquor, or select a beverage from the well-stocked bar.

There are raffles and games (bring cash for these!) Don't forget the incredible Live Auction and Chairman's Challenge during the program.

Our program will begin by 7:15 PM.

Our Legacy Honoree for 2024 is
Brigadier General Raymond Klosowski, USAF, NG (RET)

Thank you for your support.

Presenting Sponsor



Legacy sponsor



**[PURCHASE YOUR
ENTRY HERE](#)**

