

WAR MEMORIAL CENTER

2025

ANNUAL REPORT



HONOR
THE
DEAD



SERVE
THE
LIVING

03. Annual Letter

04. WMC Impact

06. Field of Flags

08. Education Programs

09. Defending Freedom

10. Preserving Our Future

12. Rentals

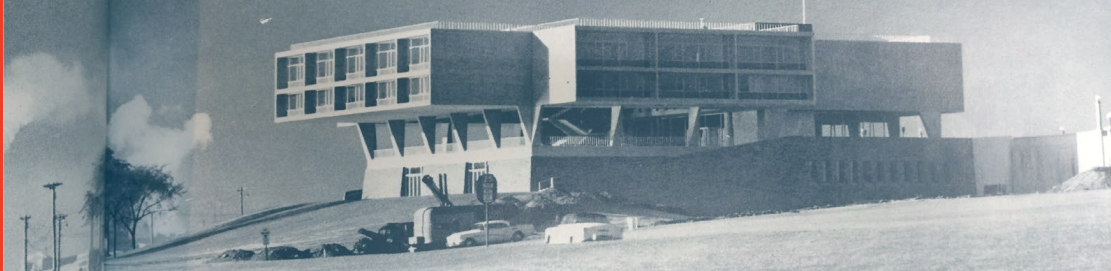
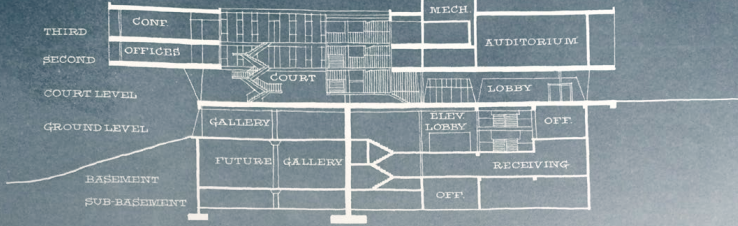
13. Financials

14. 2025 Highlights

15. WMC Leadership

16. Donors & Sponsors

18. Board of Trustees



On the Cover: Blue Star Mothers of America National 2025 Convention visits War Memorial Center. We proudly salute and thank the military moms.



2025

ANNUAL LETTER

Dear Friends,

2025 was a year of transition and transformation for your War Memorial Center.

We launched the Preserving Our Future campaign—the largest capital campaign in our history. We worked with legislators in Madison to secure a State grant. We also assembled a distinguished cabinet of civic and philanthropic leaders to guide this effort and raise matching funds to compliment those entrusted to our care by the State of Wisconsin. At the same time, we conducted a nationwide search for our next President & CEO.

We are just getting started.

Change is powerful.

For us, change means being proactive. The transformational Preserving Our Future campaign established a preservation fund that will ensure the War Memorial Center remains a lasting tribute to Wisconsin’s Veterans while expanding its impact for generations to come. This fund will support ongoing facility upkeep, stewardship of memorials, and the restoration of the Southeastern Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Memorial, originally built in 1991.

We are not just protecting a building, we are protecting a mission—the same mission that has guided us since our founding in 1957: Honor the Dead — Serve the Living.

That mission comes to life through community-building events, like Field of Flags and Service Experience Day, as well as through support for Veteran mental health and meaningful opportunities for remembrance, learning, and connection.

It also means commemorating our shared history and honoring the Veterans who have served our nation since the Revolutionary War. In 2025, we marked the 250th anniversaries of the United States Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.

In 2026, we will celebrate America’s 250th birthday. We hope you join us.

In Service,
Co Nguyen
President & CEO



Andy Gordon
Board Chairman



“The War Memorial Center is an architectural treasure, designed by Eero Saarinen, the architect of iconic works like the Gateway Arch in St. Louis and the TWA Terminal at New York’s JFK Airport. Santiago Calatrava, architect of the Milwaukee Art Museum, which is attached to the War Memorial Center, has called the Saarinen building, ‘extraordinary.’

— On Milwaukee, Senior Editor Bobby Tanzilo, July 28, 2025



WAR MEMORIAL CENTER IMPACT

THE WAR MEMORIAL CENTER

For more than 68 years, the War Memorial Center has stood as a community treasure, built on County-owned land with local support and designed by world-renowned architect Eero Saarinen. It serves as both a historic architectural landmark and a living tribute to service members past and present.

“Thank you for the Flag of Honor program. We were all in awe the whole day. I’ve never enjoyed time together like that before. I may have wiped tears away secretly.

— Kelly Gallenbeck



250,000 LIVES TOUCHED

Number of individuals engaged with WMC on campus, across the community, and online.



\$500,000 GIVE BACK

Amount of discounted/donated space and services to veterans and community organizations.



EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

13,000 Students
3,500 Veterans
119,000 Community Members

250 YEARS

WMC special exhibit “Defending America’s Freedom” celebrates the founding of the United States Armed Forces with the 250th anniversaries for Army, Navy & Marine Corps.



\$4.5 MILLION

DONATIONS

Private donations raised for Preserving Our Future campaign.

367 WMC ORNAMENTS

An anonymous donor sends our 6th annual commemorative ornament to every veteran at the Milwaukee VA via “Christmas with the Vets” program.



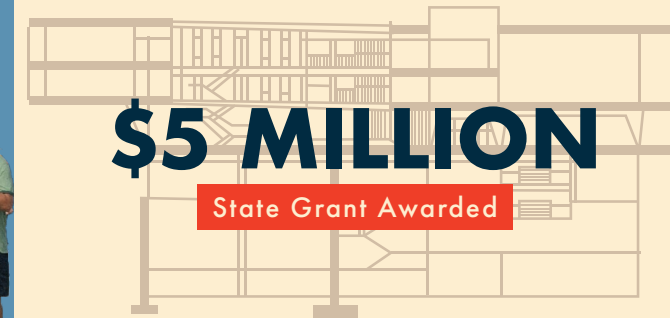
400+ RUNNERS/WALKERS

Annual Vets Day 5k & 10k participants start and end at WMC and run through beautiful Veterans Park.



\$5 MILLION

State Grant Awarded



7,200

NEW USERS FOR REACHOUTWIS.ORG

Partnered with Medical College of Wisconsin for statewide firearm safety and suicide prevention public service announcements.



MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN

5TH

SUMMER BEER GARDEN

A portion of every purchase from the War Memorial Beer Garden, in partnership with Kegel’s Inn, supports our mission.



13

FAMILIES HONORED

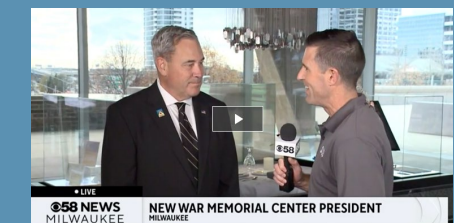
Flag of Honor program offers unique opportunity to honor a loved one’s military service on the scoreboard of a Milwaukee Brewers game.



4

LIVE TV BROADCASTS

Local TV stations broadcast live on Veterans Day and for Field of Flags.



FIELD OF FLAGS

27,316 AMERICAN FLAGS

Our sixth annual field of flags brings together hundreds of volunteers and thousands of spectators to take in the sight of 27,316 American flags in perfect alignment in Veterans Park. Each flag represents a person — a Wisconsinite — who made the ultimate sacrifice from the Civil War until today. Every Memorial Day, we build the Field of Flags as a visual reminder of the price of freedom.

“THE FLAGS SERVE AS A STUNNING REMINDER OF THE PRICE OF FREEDOM.

— Wisconsin Trending, Instagram

“AT THE CORE OF OUR MISSION IS A SOLEMN PROMISE: HONOR THE DEAD — SERVE THE LIVING. THIS FIELD OF FLAGS IS AN EMBODIMENT OF THAT PROMISE

— Andy Gordon, WMC Board Chairman



FIELD OF FLAGS CEREMONY SPEAKER

JENNY EBERT shares the story of her uncle who, at the age of 19, enlisted with the Marines. Tragically, he was killed during an ambush just months after his deployment to Vietnam in February 1968. In the fall of 2023, his military transfer case was discovered in the basement of a thrift store. It is now on display at the Oconomowoc Area Historical Society & Museum.

“AS WE STAND HERE TODAY, AMONG THESE FLAGS, LET’S COMMIT TO REMEMBER THE COURAGE, SACRIFICE, AND SERVICE OF THOSE WHO GAVE EVERYTHING. LET’S HONOR THEM BY LIVING LIVES WORTHY OF THEIR SACRIFICE.

— Jenny Ebert, Gold Star Family Member



PFC Robert S. Lutz,
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
U.S. Marine Corps,
Vietnam War

HONOR THE DEAD - SERVE THE LIVING 7

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

STUDENTS, VETERANS, & COMMUNITY



STUDENTS

Students of all ages engage with the War Memorial Center through free online lesson plans, field trips, and our popular Service Experience Day. Each opportunity brings history to life as students learn about Wisconsin service members who answered the call, and the families and friends who supported them.

WMC TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS

- Service Experience Day
- Free Downloadable Lesson Plans
- Artifact Collection
- Traveling Exhibits



VETERANS

Veteran mental health and suicide prevention remain a core priority. Through a grant-funded partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin, the War Memorial Center supports a statewide public education campaign focus on firearm safety and suicide prevention.

HOW WE HELP VETERANS

- 7,200 new users for REACHOUTWIS.org
- 325,000 people reached across all 72 Wisconsin counties
- 14,166 public service announcements valued at nearly \$495,000



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

DEFENDING FREEDOM

250TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARMED FORCES



A YEAR BEFORE THE SIGNING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, OUR ARMED FORCES WERE BORN.

U.S. ARMY

JUNE 14, 1775

U.S. MARINE CORPS

OCTOBER 13, 1775

U.S. NAVY

NOVEMBER 10, 1775

We commemorated the 250th anniversaries of these military branches with the *Defending Freedom* exhibit, new online educational lesson plans, a special edition holiday ornament, and a partnership concert with the Wisconsin Philharmonic Orchestra. Together, these initiatives connected military history, civic education, and artistic expression across generations.

THE SIXTH ORNAMENT IN OUR COLLECTION

celebrates the three oldest military institutions that have shaped American history, standing strong as symbols of our national defense, resilience, and service.

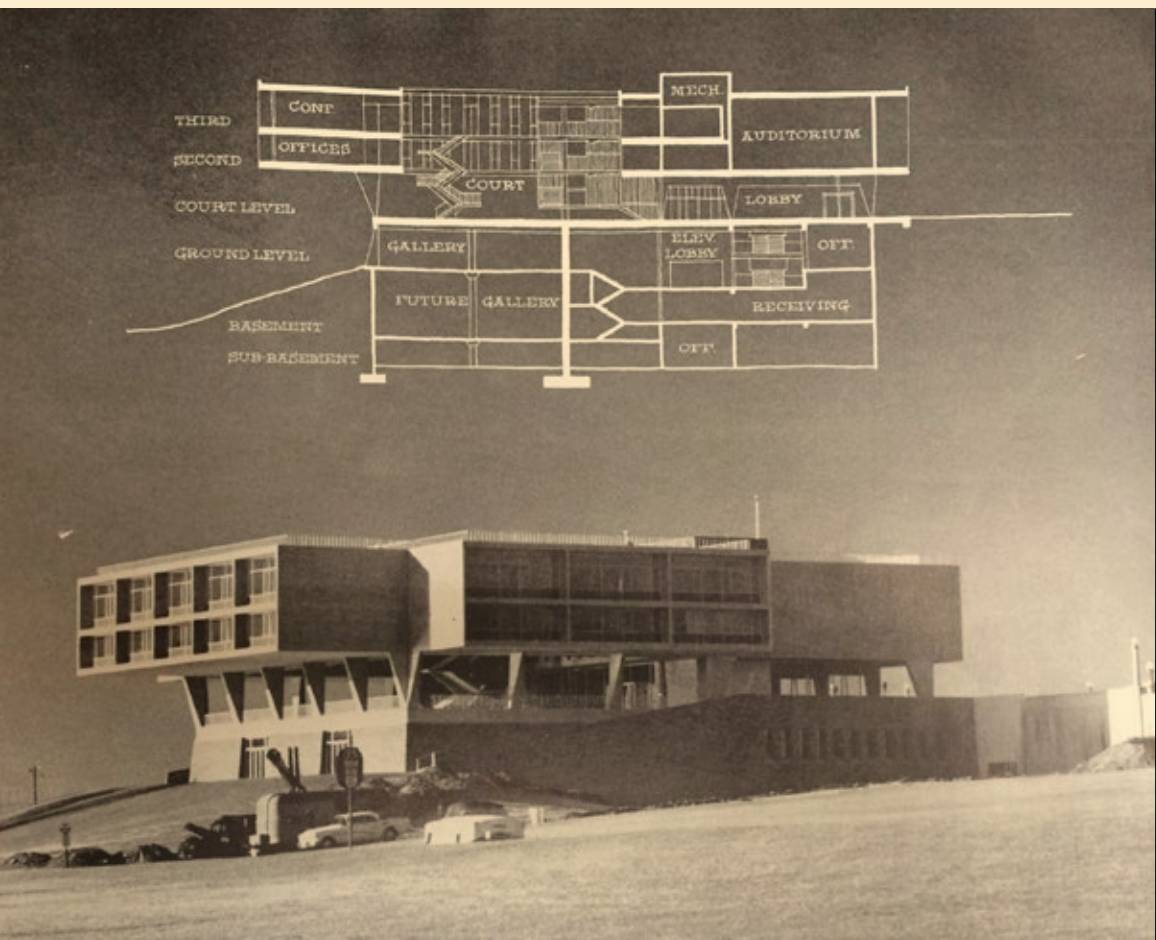
From the battlefield of the revolution to the frontlines of today's global challenges, the men and women of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps have exemplified honor and valor.

As we reflect on 250 years of steadfast service, let us recommit ourselves to supporting those who serve and to preserving the freedoms they defend.



PRESERVING OUR FUTURE

\$14 MILLION PRESERVATION FUND INITIATIVE



WAR MEMORIAL CENTER

Architect
EERO SAARINEN

Dedicated
VETERANS DAY 1957

Designated MKE Landmark
1974

The Vision
**HONOR THE DEAD —
SERVE THE LIVING**



To protect our historic landmark and the memorials under our stewardship, we launched **OPERATION ADVANCE: Preserving Our Future** — a \$14 million campaign to establish a permanent Preservation Fund and restore the Southeastern Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

As a living memorial open to all, we remain committed to accessibility and education — but preservation requires long-term stability. A dedicated Preservation Fund ensures that care of the building and memorials will never compete with mission-driven programs.

OPERATION ADVANCE: PRESERVING OUR FUTURE

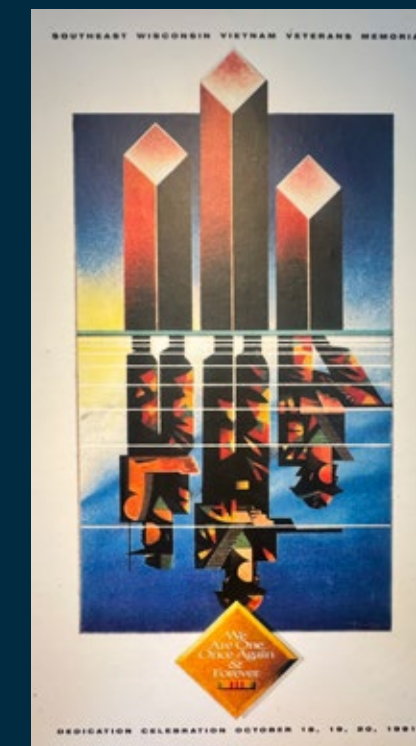


76% of our goal has been raised to-date which includes \$5 million from the state of Wisconsin delivered through a one-to-one matching grant administered by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. This funding comes at a critical time. With Milwaukee County's annual support being gradually phased out—reduced from \$486,000 last year to zero by 2034— the War Memorial Center must secure sustainable, independent funding.

OPERATION ADVANCE WILL:

- ★ Establish a dedicated Preservation Fund to support long-term building care and memorial stewardship
- ★ Fully restore the Vietnam Veterans Memorial
- ★ Ensure ongoing maintenance so these sacred spaces remain dignified and accessible
- ★ Safeguard this landmark for generations to come

VIETNAM MEMORIAL



The Preservation Fund will restore the Southeastern Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Memorial, originally built in 1991 to honor the 57,000 Wisconsinites who served in Vietnam.

CAMPAIGN CABINET

The private philanthropy campaign is being led by a distinguished Campaign Cabinet of civic and philanthropic leaders:

Co Chairs

MICHAEL W. GREBE
STEVE MARCUS

Cabinet Members

CANDEE ARNDT
STEVE BEISER
ANDY GORDON
BILL NASGOVITZ
CO NGUYEN
MARY READ

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

RENTALS

MILWAUKEE'S PREMIER LAKEFRONT VENUE

Historic significance, unique spaces, and a sprawling patio make the War Memorial Center a versatile backdrop for weddings and private events. This revenue goes directly to supporting our mission of Honor the Dead — Serve the Living.



SPACES FOR RENT

- FITCH PLAZA
- MEMORIAL HALL
- VETERANS COURTYARD
- VETERANS GALLERY
- PRIVATE SUITES
- MEETING ROOMS

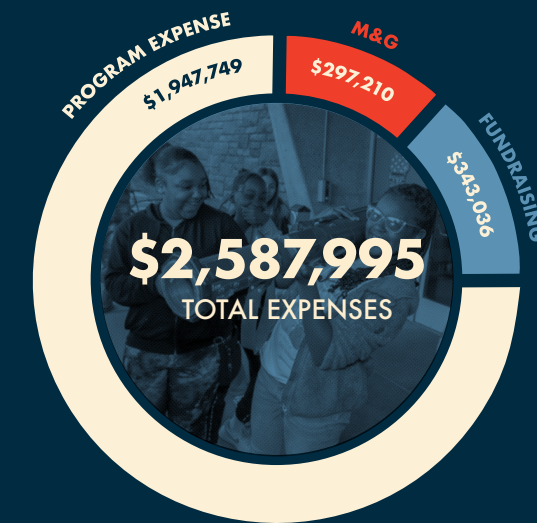
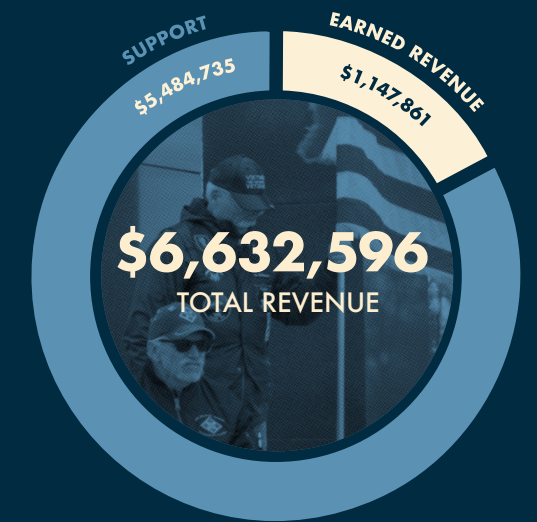
“When we stepped onto the Fitch Plaza at the War Memorial Center, we knew the stunning view of Lake Michigan was the perfect backdrop for our wedding ceremony.

— WMC 2025 Bride

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

FINANCIALS

WMC FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2025



\$21,128,309
TOTAL ASSETS

\$3,874,247
TOTAL LIABILITIES

\$17,254,062
TOTAL NET ASSETS

A complete copy of the War Memorial Center's financial statements is available upon request. Find our IRS Form 990 at warmemorialcenter.org/about

2025 HIGHLIGHTS

OUR MISSION TO "SERVE THE LIVING" IS FULFILLED ALL YEAR LONG AT THE WAR MEMORIAL CENTER



ROBOTICS FOR VETS

WMC teams up with the Spinal Cord Injury Center at the Milwaukee VA for this empowering program.



VA WOMEN'S RETREAT

Hosted by the Milwaukee VA to facilitate connection to physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual resilience.



FIELD OF FLAGS

Every Memorial Day week, volunteers help create a field of 27,316 flags as a visual reminder of the price of freedom.



MUSIC IN THE GARDEN

Live music, car shows, and resource tables for veterans at the summer beer garden compliments of the SE Wisconsin Veteran Suicide Prevention Taskforce.



MILWAUKEE COUNTY REMEMBERS 9/11

Every year, we gather to remember the tragic events of September 11, 2001.



VETERANS DAY

Runners and walkers race through Veterans Park with the start/finish at the War Memorial Center.

JAN.

FEB.

MAR.

APR.

APR.

MAY

MAY

JUNE - SEPT.

AUG.

SEPT.

NOV.

NOV.

DEC.

FROST FEST

Free family fun hosted by the SE Wisconsin Veteran Suicide Prevention Taskforce.



NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR VETERANS DAY

Annual ceremony to honor those who served in Vietnam.



SERVICE EXPERIENCE DAY

This "field trip on steroids" brings hundreds of students to the War Memorial Center to interact with veterans and current service members.



WAR MEMORIAL BEER GARDEN

Kegel's Inn operates the popular summer gathering spot on Milwaukee's lakefront for a fifth year. Open late May through September.



PURPLE HEART DAY CEREMONY

Annual ceremony to honor those wounded or killed while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.



VETERANS DAY

Every day is Veterans Day at WMC, but November 11 is extra special with numerous events.



CHRISTMAS WITH THE VETS

WMC ornaments donated to this cherished Milwaukee tradition of veterans helping veterans.



THANK YOU IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT FOR THE EVENT WE BROUGHT TO LIFE. I AM HONORED TO WORK WITH SUCH INCREDIBLE HUMANS WHO PUT STUDENTS, VETERANS AND EDUCATION AT THE FOREFRONT. REFLECTING ON THE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN VETERANS AND TEENAGERS BRINGS A SMILE TO MY FACE.

— Julie Theim, Work-based Learning Specialist

WMC LEADERSHIP



Co Nguyen transitioned from interim to full-time President/CEO of the War Memorial Center in 2025, after stepping up from the Board of Trustees to

lead WMC after Dan Buttery retired for health reasons. As a veteran himself, Co connected to our veteran community in a unique way. He graduated from West Point, the fourth Vietnamese-American in its history selected for admission. Co's family escaped from Vietnam on a boat right after the fall of Saigon. Co



remembers his grandfather telling his dad to

"always look for freedom no matter the sacrifice."



AS A YOUNG BOY GROWING UP IN WAR-TORN VIETNAM, I ALWAYS LOOKED UP TO THE G.I.S AS MY HEROES.

— Co Nguyen



On Veterans Day 2025, we introduced Major General Brian Winski, U.S. Army (Ret.) as our next President/CEO. Brian is only the

sixth leader in our 68-year history. Brian is a decorated officer who retired from the U.S. Army as a two-star general after 37 years of distinguished service. He brings unmatched leadership experience and perspective from his decades of service around the world, including multiple combat deployments.



IT IS A PROFOUND HONOR TO LEAD AN ORGANIZATION WITH SUCH A RICH HISTORY OF HONORING AND SUPPORTING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

— General Brian Winski

DONORS & SPONSORS

THANK YOU



INDIVIDUAL DONORS

The War Memorial Center is so much more than a building. We can never forget the price of freedom and must pass this rich history to the next generation. Thank you to our dedicated donors who make this work possible. Your generosity turns remembrance into action. Every gift matters.

WAYS TO GIVE

- Memorial and Tribute Gifts
- Donor Advised Funds
- Legacy Gifts
- Stock Gifts
- Workplace Giving Programs

“ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF WAUKESHA, I WANT TO EXTEND OUR DEEPEST GRATITUDE FOR YOUR POWERFUL AND MOVING ADDRESS DURING OUR VETERANS DAY RECOGNITION. YOUR WORDS CAPTURED THE SPIRIT OF THE DAY PERFECTLY – HONORING THE COURAGE, SACRIFICE, AND SERVICE OF OUR VETERANS WHILE REMINDING US OF THE LASTING IMPACT THEY HAVE ON YOU, OUR NATION, AND OUR COMMUNITIES.”

— Joanna



Volunteers from Old National Bank help with Service Experience Day.

We are grateful for the loyal support of so many outstanding organizations. Thank you for supporting our mission: Honor the Dead — Serve the Living.

13 YEARS	12 YEARS	11 YEARS	10 YEARS	9 YEARS
8 YEARS	7 YEARS	5 YEARS	4 YEARS	1 YEAR
NEW SPONSORS				

“WHAT A GREAT EVENT FOR OUR COMMUNITY. WE ARE PROUD TO BE A SPONSOR EACH YEAR. THANK YOU.”

— Spectrum Investment Advisors

WMC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



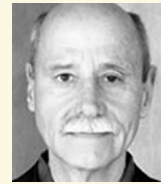
Charles A. (Andy) Gordon, Chairman, Trustee since 2016

Andy Gordon graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and was commissioned as an infantry officer in the 101st Airborne Division. Andy spent seven years in the Army, deploying twice to Iraq. Andy earned his law degree cum laude from Marquette University and is now a litigation attorney at Godfrey & Kahn, S.C.



Mary B. Read, Vice-Chairwoman, Trustee since 2019

Mary Read graduated from Smith College and earned her law degree from Marquette University. A retired attorney, she serves on several nonprofit boards. Mary comes from a long line of West Point graduates beginning with her great-great-grandfather, an officer in the Civil War for the Union Army.



Michael B. Koszuta, Secretary, Trustee since 2018

Mike Koszuta served 30 years in the U.S. Army retiring as a Regimental Command Sergeant Major receiving the Legion of Merit medal. Before the Army, Mike served in law enforcement for the Milwaukee Police Department and the U.S. Coast Guard PSU 303 in Saudi Arabia — Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Mike is very active in training service dogs for disabled veterans.



Michael Gibson, Treasurer, Trustee since 2016

Mike Gibson graduated from Xavier University's ROTC program and was commissioned as an Engineer Officer. He served 22 years in the U.S. Army retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel. His last assignment was as Professor of Military Science (PMS) at Marquette University, where he led the Army ROTC program developing hundreds of Cadets and ultimately commissioning 99 Second Lieutenants. Mike deployed numerous times to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Haiti. He's currently a Construction Project Manager for J.H. Findorff & Son.



Michael W. Grebe, Immediate Past Chairman, Trustee since 2016

Michael Grebe is an American philanthropist, lawyer, and businessman. He was Chairman/CEO of Foley & Lardner law firm and President/CEO of the Bradley Foundation. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and earned his law degree magna cum laude from the University of Michigan. He was awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge and two Bronze Stars for his service in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War.



Candee Arndt, Trustee since 2020

Candee Arndt is an event services professional and proud daughter of a World War II veteran. Candee serves on boards for the Milwaukee Armed Services Committee, Navy League and Milwaukee Air & Water Show. She developed and runs Milwaukee's annual Armed Forces Day Dinner and was on the commissioning committee for the *USS Milwaukee*.



Steve Beiser, Trustee since 2025

Steve is a nationally recognized private wealth advisor and partner at BMG, guiding owners, families, and executives through the intersection of wealth, business, and legacy. A Cornell graduate with an MBA from Kellogg, he spent two decades on Wall Street, helping build Robert W. Baird's institutional sales and trading platform and later running the national sales trading desk at Wedbush. Steve is a Certified Private Wealth Advisor® specializing in advanced tax planning, estate and asset protection, and multi-generational wealth transfer. He is an active member of Vistage Wisconsin and a premier sponsor of Wish for Our Heroes.



Dan Carey, Trustee since 2025

Dan Carey graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point and was commissioned as a field artillery officer in the 4th Infantry Division. Dan served in Kuwait as part of Operation Intrinsic Action. Following the Army, Dan received an MBA from Marquette University. Dan is the co-owner of RBP Chemical Technology and the founder of the Whitefish Bay Memorial Day Ceremony.



Berdie Cowser, Trustee since 2020

Berdie Cowser holds a PhD in Educational Leadership and is a seasoned executive leader with extensive experience in veterans services, housing, and community development. She began her military journey in high school and later became a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army and Army Reserves. Berdie is featured in the I Am Not Invisible traveling exhibit, which highlights the leadership and lived experiences of women veterans.



Joshua Davis, Trustee since 2022

Josh Davis is the Senior Director for Services Training, Facilities, EHS and Training Safety for General Electric HealthCare. He served 28-years in all three Army components retiring from the U.S. Army at Fort Moore (formerly Fort Benning), Georgia. Josh served in multiple capacities during his career across combat arms and The U.S. Army Medical Department Regiment across the globe.



Robert "Bert" Garvin, Trustee since 2018

Bert Garvin is VP of External Affairs for WEC Energy Group. He leads the company's legislative and regulatory affairs at the federal, state and local levels. Bert served in the Wisconsin Army National Guard and is an Iraq War veteran. He holds Bachelor of Arts and Juris Doctor degrees from the University of Wisconsin Madison.



Eugene Manzanet, Trustee since 2023

Eugene Manzanet, Ph.D. is the Senior Director of Diverse Business Development for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. Eugene serves on numerous nonprofit boards and advisory councils throughout the Milwaukee area. He served as a mayoral appointment as the vice-chairman of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District.



Bill Nasgovitz, Trustee since 2025

Bill Nasgovitz is founder of Heartland Advisors, Inc., serving as Chairman and Portfolio Manager for the Heartland Value Fund and Small Cap Value Strategy. He proudly served in the United States Air Force, attaining the rank of Captain. Bill is deeply committed to community service and Free Enterprise Education at his alma mater, Milwaukee Lutheran High School & St. Augustine Preparatory Academy. Bill is married for 55 years to his wife, Marian, and has five children and seven grandchildren. In his leisure time, Bill enjoys gardening and golf.



Jean Ruka, Trustee since June 2014

Jean Ruka graduated from Alverno College with a degree in Medical Technology; entering the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War under the CASP Program. Jean served as enlisted and was eventually commissioned as an officer. Jean has been affiliated with numerous Veteran organizations.

WMC STAFF

Co Nguyen President & CEO

Laurie Kildegaard Chief Operating Officer

Vicki Chappell Chief Strategy & Program Officer

Sean Clark Program Director

Gina Leszcynski Event Manager

Mark Waldoch Accountant

Jenna Johnson Administrative Assistant

Nanette Prendergast Development Assistant

Armando Herrera Facilities Manager

Brandon James Event Staff

Ivan Mischker Event Staff





2026 EVENTS

Celebrating America 250

CHAT WITH THE GENERAL
Quarterly Conversations

FIELD OF FLAGS
Memorial Day Week

SUMMER BEER GARDEN
May to September
operated by Kegel's Inn

MUSIC IN THE GARDEN
June/July/August

STAR SPANGLED TEA PARTY
July 23

MILWAUKEE REMEMBERS 9/11
September 11

SERVICE EXPERIENCE DAY
OCTOBER 29 & 30

VETS DAY 5K
November 7

SIJAN DOCUMENTARY SCREENING
Date TBD



@warmemorialcenter
@War Memorial Center Weddings



@mke_warmemorial
@wmc_weddings



@WarMemorialCntr



@WarMemorialCenter



@WarMemorialCenter

CONTACT US

(414) 273-5533

warmemorialcenter.org

War Memorial Center 750 N. Lincoln Memorial Drive Milwaukee, WI 53202