

Greetings American Legion Family.

The words “thank you” do not always express how one truly feels. To some, they are just words. We are all thankful for so many things. Please allow me to express what thank you means to me. To each of you who have mentored me and who have supported me in my past endeavors, those that have seen something in me that I have not always seen in myself – THANK YOU. To each of you for believing in me and giving me a chance as well as those of you who continue to nurture and mentor me as your next Department President – THANK YOU. It is only because of you that I ever considered this path. They say that God works in miraculous ways. Each of you are His guiding light. I need each of you and together we can make 2022-2023 another successful year.

We all know people with disabilities. Some disabilities are easier to recognize than others. For example, when we see someone using a walking device, wheelchair, or other mobility aid. What about the disabilities that are not as visible such as PTSD, visual impairments, hearing loss, or anxiety? These are not noticeable by just looking at someone. We may have noticed that some people talk louder, lean towards someone who is talking, perhaps misunderstand a word, or are quiet; they may be hearing impaired. Those with anxiety may have trouble sitting still. Perhaps someone with a learning disability might take longer to comprehend what is happening. We need to be considerate of them as well as those who do not have a disability. Most people with disabilities do not like sharing this information with anyone. Some might be embarrassed, ashamed, uncomfortable, or just do not wish to talk about themselves. One thing we all need to keep in mind is to speak louder, use a microphone, not to talk so fast. Be willing to explain or repeat. Many people might not realize that they have a soft voice which does not carry as well without a microphone. We are an American Legion Family and we all need to work together to be kind, compassionate, and supportive.

We have all said or done something that hurt the feelings of someone else. Likely, it was not on purpose, with a vendetta, or for any other reason. One does not set out to intentionally demean or do damage to another person. Many times, something that was said might easily be misunderstood as well as the frustration or excitement that someone is feeling at that time. For me personally, I tend to speak louder than others due to my hearing loss and when it is noisy in the room it is harder to discern voices. My voice may seem rough around the edges, due to the hoarseness in my voice. This is where open communication is so important. We have all been taught to stand up for ourselves, as we are only responsible for ourselves. If we do not let someone know what is bothering us, how can one resolve issues? Before a situation becomes too large to handle, approach that person, one on one, and try to resolve it. To each person who I

may have hurt in any way, I sincerely apologize. This was not my intention. There are times when a person may not have a good relationship with someone else. Whether it be a personality difference or something else, this does not mean we purposely try to upset another person.

Just because someone has a different idea, does not make them wrong nor does it mean they should not be heard. Everyone's ideas are important and worth listening to. None of us are going to agree on everything. We all have one goal, which is to support our veterans. Each of you is just as important as the next person, and each of you has something unique to offer. We are the American Legion Family, and we all need to work together. I cannot do my job without the help of each of you.

One of my goals for 2022-2023 is to increase awareness of the American Legion Auxiliary within our communities. This, in turn, may increase our membership. I have heard from people that they did not know we exist. I will be working with the District Presidents on this with more information to follow later.

I will be holding a raffle to raise funds for my 2022-2023 "Presidents Projects." If you or someone you know would like to donate an item, please email me at president@ndala.org (after June 30) to let me know. I appreciate everyone's support with this. Tickets will be \$1.00 each with a book for \$10.00. (Available after formal installation at Department Convention) The projects that I have chosen are: the "Western North Dakota Honor Flight - Bismarck," which allows veterans to go to Washington DC to see the memorial as well as other scheduled sites, and the "Injured Military Wildlife Project of North Dakota," which is a group of North Dakota citizens that provides hunting and fishing opportunities for veterans who have been injured in the line of duty as well as provides meat to veterans in need.

For God and Country,

Sandra Petermann, Department President-elect