RICHARD I. BONG VETERANS HISTORICAL CENTER • FALL/WINTER 2025

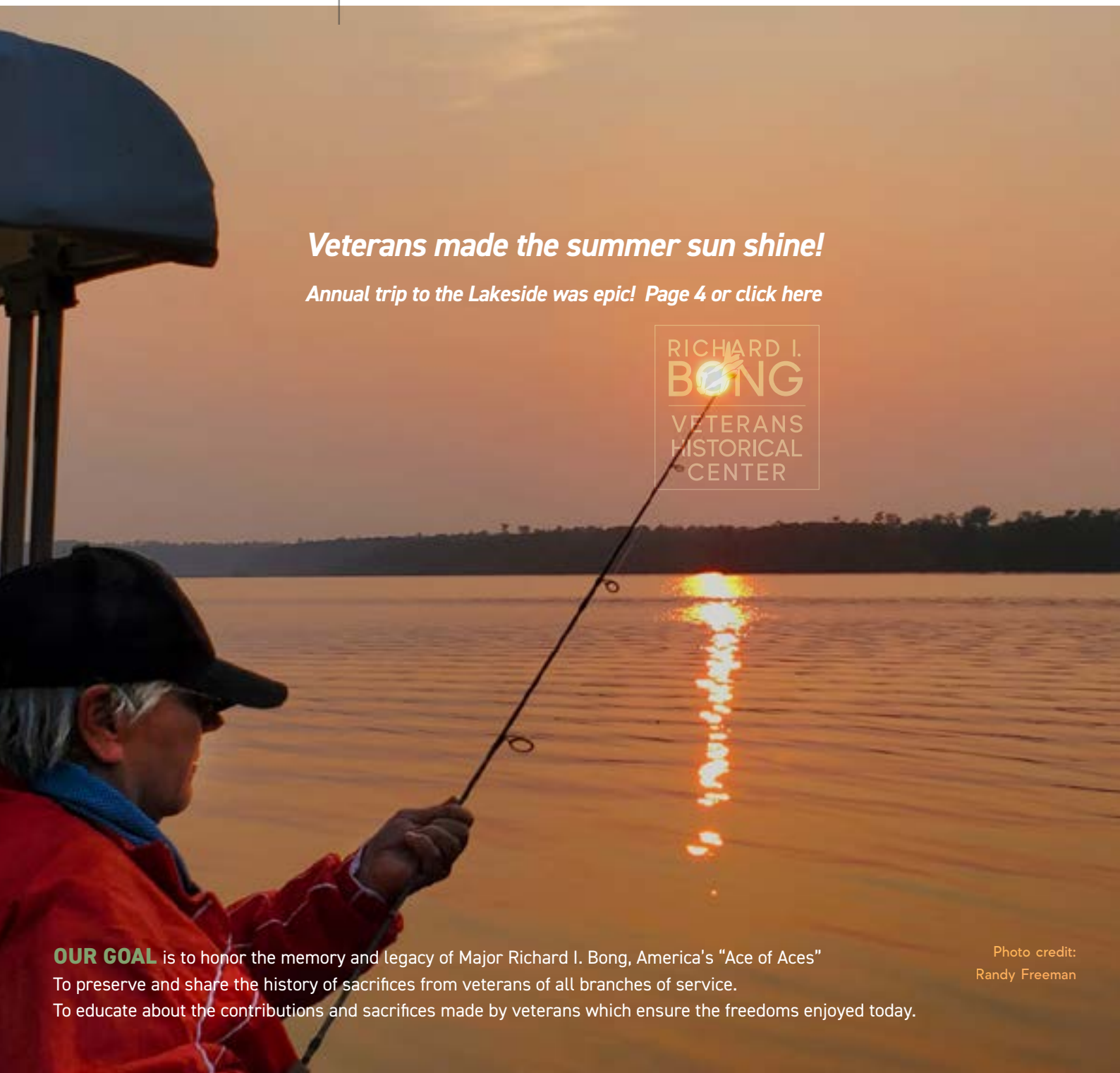
BONGVHC

#5
SEPT/OCT/NOV
2025

VETERANS TO THE LAKESIDE
New format for veterans to enjoy bonding and up north!

22ND ANNUAL SALUTE TO HEROES GALA
Join us November 6th

MURDER MYSTERY
Join us October 18th for Murder at the Museum.



Veterans made the summer sun shine!

Annual trip to the Lakeside was epic! Page 4 or click here

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.

Photo credit:
Randy Freeman

SALUTE TO HEROES, GALA ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

Join us Thursday, November 6th at the Garden on Canal

Once a year, our community gathers for something truly special, an evening dedicated to raising the support that sustains the work of the Bong Veterans Historical Center. More than just a fundraiser; it is a chance to come together as neighbors, friends, and supporters to honor veterans, celebrate our shared history, and invest in the future of our mission.

This year guests will enjoy the warmth of community while helping to raise vital funds that allow the Center to continue telling veterans' stories. Our program will feature exciting updates on Mission Marge, along with highlights of the many ways our staff, volunteers, and supporters are bringing history to life inside the museum and out in the community.

We are also humbled to honor the memory of Rod Campbell as our 2025 Legacy Honoree. Rod was a powerful advocate for the Bong Veterans Historical Center, devoting his energy, voice, and heart to the Center's mission.

Your presence at this year's fundraiser is more than attendance—it is a statement of support. Every ticket purchased, every conversation shared, and every dollar raised strengthens our ability to honor veterans, educate future generations, and preserve the stories that shaped our nation.

Join us for this meaningful, and festive evening. Together, we will remember the past, celebrate the present, and invest in a future where veterans' sacrifices are never forgotten.

Purchase GALA Tickets

Individual tickets available until day of event.
Half or whole table sponsorships available until October 23rd, on our website.

VOLUNTEERS MAKE THE MUSEUM GO ROUND

We need History Lovers, Storytellers, Socializers, & All Around DOERS!

We are looking to beef up our cadre of world class volunteers at the museum. Our volunteers are at the heartbeat of our mission. Volunteers bring the history alive for our guests.

We are looking for folks who can

- work with the education team to present information to school groups.
- act as docent inside the museum
- guide guests into the experience of the museum.

Shifts are adaptable and plentiful. We train our volunteers, all information shared with guests is in written form. So if you worry you don't "know enough" we have written guides and human guides to help you find your comfort level!

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Jodi Fiske: 715-718-7842 email: jodi@bongcenter.org.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOHN GIDLEY

Hello Everyone!

Fall is shaping up to be an exciting season here at the Bong Center, and we'd love for you to be part of it! On November 6th, we'll gather for our Annual Fundraising Gala, a night to celebrate our mission and community. This year, we're excited to honor the late Rod Campbell for his incredible support with this year's Legacy Award, and we'll also hear from Justin Talan of Pacific Wrecks with an update on the Mission Marge project. It's going to be an inspiring evening you won't want to miss.

Back by popular demand is our Murder Mystery Dinner Theater with the brand-new show "Murder at the Museum: Who Killed Josh Pennellton?" It's sure to be another unforgettable night of fun, food, and mystery! Tickets on sale now on line or in our gift shop. Go to events at www.bongcenter.org for more info.

October brings plenty of family-friendly ways to enjoy the season with us. Join us for our Halloween Trunk or Treat on October 29th sponsored by the Twin Ports Rampage. Our parking lot will be filled with tons of fun and free tricks and treats and don't miss Ghosts in the Gallery the last two weekends in October—a spooky, interactive way to experience the museum.

And of course, one of our favorite traditions: on Thanksgiving Day we will once again host a free holiday meal for veterans and their families. It's our way of giving thanks for their service and sharing the spirit of the season together.

We're grateful for your continued support and hope you'll join us for one—or several—of these special events. Together, we keep the legacy of Major Bong and all veterans alive and meaningful for future generations.

With gratitude and Thanks,

John Gidley, Executive Director
Richard I Bong Veterans Historical Center
gidley@bongcenter.org

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One night means so much to us.

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DAYS OF NOTE

October 9	Speaker Series: Donna Bergstrom
	250 Years of Honor: The Marine Corps Story
Oct. 13	U.S. Navy birthday 1775
Oct. 18	Murder Mystery Dinner Party
	Spooky Season tour options
Oct. 21	WPR Pint Sized (Brass) Concert
Oct. 23	Evening with the Authors
	Spooky Season tour options
Oct. 26	National Day of the Deployed

NOVEMBER MILITARY FAMILY APPRECIATION MONTH

Nov. 6	Salute to Heroes Gala Evening

VETERANS SOAKED UP THE FUN & SUN AT THE FREE LAKESIDE RETREAT THIS SUMMER!

Each summer, the Bong Center proudly takes veterans on an all-expenses-covered week-long retreat in northern Minnesota. It's a chance to step away from daily routines and immerse in the peace and beauty of the outdoors—fishing, hiking, relaxing by the water, and, most importantly, building bonds with fellow veterans.

This year, from July 28 through August 3, six veterans joined us for a lakeside retreat near Ely. The group enjoyed days filled with fishing, quiet moments of reflection, and plenty of laughter and camaraderie around the cabin. Along the way, they explored northern Minnesota treasures, including the International Wolf Center, the International Bear Center, and the Dorothy Moliter (Root Beer Lady) Museum. They also set out on unforgettable boat rides into the pristine Boundary Waters Canoe Area, where the natural beauty created lasting memories.

Next year's retreat is already on the calendar for July 13–19, 2026, and promises another week of rest, adventure, and community.

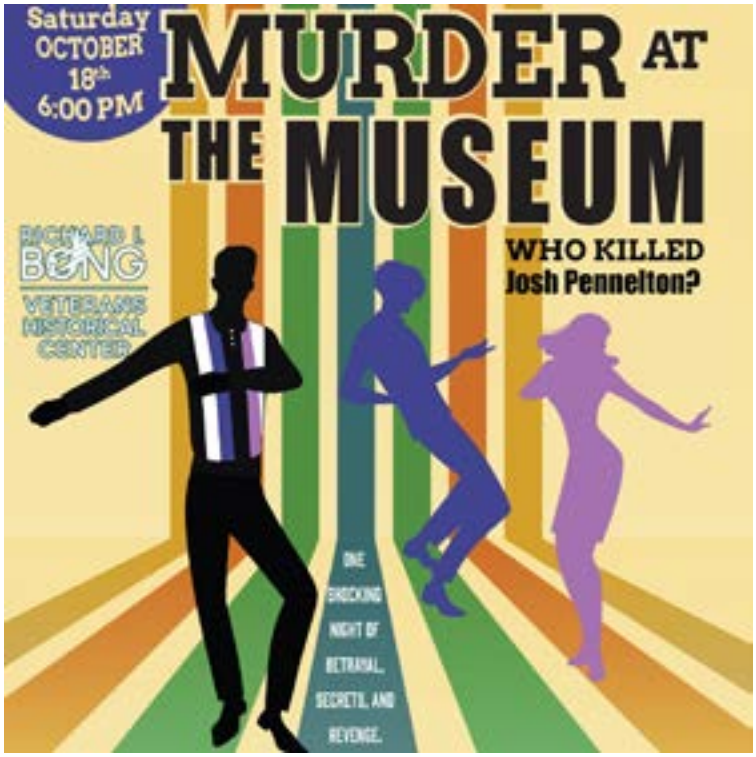
Applications will be available beginning in March, keep an eye out for your chance to join us on this meaningful experience.

Encourage your veteran to apply for 2026. This summer event is a more relaxed, less physically taxing, week.

Click to go to our website & application

MURDER (AT THE MUSEUM) MYSTERY DINNER

Brand new mystery set in fictitious 1960s Bong Museum



October 18th a brand new mystery written exclusively for us by author Gary C. Banker, and performed by actors from Murder Mystery Inc, will play out in our museum. Only 45 guests will enjoy the new intriguing mystery set around a three course meal in our mezzanine.

Wear your grooviest duds as the clues lead you on a 1960s inspired murder mystery based in the pretend world of a 60's Bong Center museum.

Three course barbecued chicken dinner by veteran-owned Room at the Table Catering.

TICKETS available online or call Guest Services.

NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION

National POW/MIA Recognition Day is the third Friday in September. To commemorate and honor those men and women who were prisoners or are still missing, the Bong Veterans Center set up the Missing Man table September 19-September 21st, 2025. The table is a ceremonial memorial honoring and remembering prisoners of war, missing in action, and fallen service members. Every element on the table holds symbolic meaning and Saturday, September 20th, 2025, members of American Legion Post 435 shared those symbolic meanings in a special ceremony.

Following the POW/MIA ceremony, historian Abby Allcox, spoke. She presented a program on the WWII POW camps in Wisconsin. The program focused on the 39 Wisconsin prisoner-of-war camps which housed German soldiers. After the prisoners were sent home, the camps were mostly forgotten until the logbook of Fort McCoy's POW Camp Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Horace I. Rogers, was recovered in 2023. Its daily entries provide glimpses into the everyday events of the camp.

About our speaker: Abigail Allcox, a High School, teacher, graduated from Marquette University in 2024 with master's in U.S. History, researching German prisoners of war during World War II. She produces a podcast, Badgerland Journal, where each entry focuses on a unique story in Wisconsin's history.

FREE CONCERT • OPEN TO EVERYONE!

FLYING OFF THE SHELVES FOR GOOD

Summer 2025 was one of our busiest, and most exciting seasons yet in the Bong Veterans Historical Center Gift Shop. Thanks to our visitors and members, merchandise tied to our history and legacy has been flying off the shelves.

After being out of stock for nearly a year, our popular P-38 magnets return was eagerly awaited! Another hit item this summer has been our new P-38 pins, (we adore the image of Marge with hers). Introduced in May, these pins quickly became one of the most requested products. (Demonstrating just how much our community loves to display their pride and support.)

Despite price increases due to tariffs, shoppers continue to support our gift shop. Among the fastest-moving items were P-38 mugs, P-38 hats, and P-38 toys—all of which sold out and had to be reordered quickly.

This strong season shows not only the passion visitors have for the legacy of Richard Bong and the P-38 Lightning, but also how vital the gift shop is in supporting our programs and mission. Every purchase helps the Center continue to honor veterans, tell their stories, and inspire future generations.

So, if you haven't yet, stop in soon—before these best-sellers disappear again!

Notice Marge's pin in the photo? *Get your very own P38 pin in our shop OR online!*

Have an idea? *Send us your favorite military products. We'd love to explore adding them to our shelves!*

DISCOVER WISCONSIN'S HIDDEN GEMS

Please join us for an entertaining evening with the charming authors Tom and Kristi Manus as they discuss their books “Secret Wisconsin, A Guide to the Weird, Wonderful, and Obscure” and “ Historic Wisconsin Roadsides”

Bring your books or buy some in our museum store and have them autographed that evening! This free evening of storytelling and discovery is Thursday, October 23rd at 6:00 PM.

Tom and Kristi Manus are presented by Superior Tourist Information Center

KEEL LAYING WATCH PARTY • RECAP

USS Wisconsin Keel Laying Watch Party was on August 27, 2025. The Keel Laying Ceremony symbolizes when the ship begins to transition from design to reality by marking the formal recognition of the start of a ship's construction. Today, fabrication of a submarine begins many months before some of the ship's lower sections are joined together. However, the Keel Laying Ceremony (also referred to as the Keel Authentication Ceremony) symbolically recognizes the joining of modular components and the ceremonial beginning of construction of a ship. We shared the broadcast of the actual private ceremony hosted by General Dynamics Electric Boat at their Quonset Point, RI, facility with light refreshments and good conversation.

left to right: Doug Muller, West Lake Superior Sub Vets Superior WI, Bill Ackermann, Ozark Runner Sub Vets Springfield MO, Mayor Payne, Dale Steinke, Mpls/St. Paul Sub Vets, John Selleck, Mpls/St. Paul Sub Vets, Jim Olsen Mpls/St. Paul Sub Vets, Butch Liebert, American Legion Post 435 Commander

Meetings for both Legion & Auxiliary on second Tuesdays every month at 7:00PM at Richard I. Bong Veterans Historical Center. **NEXT MEETINGS:** October 14 • November 11 always 7:00PM **New folks always welcome!**

AMERICAN LEGION • NOTES

GREAT NORTHERN CLASSIC RODEO HONORS

On Sunday, August 31st, Post 435 honored fellow Honor Guard (HG) member Bill Britton at the Great Northern Classic Rodeo. The HG provides a flag detail for the National Anthem for the rodeo on Sunday at this event each year. Bill was chosen for his dedication and contributions to the Post and Honor Guard throughout his 16 years as a member of the post.

Left: Bill Britton with Nova Nordrum, a Superior rider who performs with others at the rodeo.

POST 435 HONORS!

We are proud to have honored our 34 year member, Richard Smith, at a recent meeting, for his wealth of contributions to our post. Dick, still an active member at age 95, joined the post after serving his country in Korea. Dick served; as Post Commander from 1996 -1999, as post chaplain until recently, and as a member of the Honor Guard for 17 years. Dick still attends funerals where he plays taps.

Shown in the picture is Dick (center) receiving a Certificate of Appreciation from Post Commander Butch Liebaert (right) while fellow member John Vaski (Left) waits to present Dick an album with pictures of Dick at different post events.

Certificate for Military Honors:

Ian Lambert recently completed the Military Funeral Honors Certificate Program to be able to participate as an Honor Guard Member.

Pictured lower right: Post Commander Butch Liebaert (left) presenting Ian Lambert (right) with his certificate and pin at a recent meeting.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY UNIT 435 3RD ANNUAL

SIP SUPPORT & SALUTE

OCTOBER 11, 2025
11:00AM - 3:00PM

RAISE YOUR GLASS TO HELP LOCAL VETERANS

Red, White & Brew

Silent Auction, Bag Raffle, Meat Raffle and more
ALL LOCAL: Food & Beverages, Artists & Shops!

Richard I. Bong Veterans Historical Center
305 Harbor View Parkway • Superior WI

Need details? Email: AmericanLegionAux1@gmail.com
All funds raised will help the Auxiliary support local Veterans, and their families.

OUR AVIATION EDUCATION NEEDS YOUR HIGH FLYING HELP

Bong Veterans Historical Center was awarded a student flight simulator, by SIA (Students in Aviation) in the hopes of helping nurture youth to want to fly like our home town hero. Simulator demos began Memorial weekend with support of our volunteers, and staff.

We have directions on how to have basic flight experience for guests and have amassed a list of true flight enthusiasts who are interested in more guidance than mere non-pilots/instructors can provide. If you don't have a background in flying, an educator could easily run the program.

SIA has a complete, detailed, well developed online database of instructions and videos to follow for both instructor and the students interested in learning.

Please help us with this fledgling program, reach out to John Gidley, Executive Director, at 715-392-7151

SPEAKER SERIES

Our Speaker Series are ALWAYS: on a Thursday, free, and begin at 6:30

If you know of interesting speakers, please tell us!

Call Briana Fiandt
715-718-7023, or email:
fiandt@bongcenter.org

FALL/WINTER

Donna Bergstrom

250 Years of Honor:
The Marine Corps Story

October 9th • 6:30 PM

Please, join us November 6th, at the Garden on Canal.

Tickets are available on our website or by calling Guest Service at 715-392-7151