American Legion Post 21 in Anchorage is the winner.

**Alaska Legionnaires**

**Drew Dix** became the first enlisted member of the U.S. Special Forces to earn the Medal of Honor for heroism in Vietnam. Dix was serving as an adviser to a Vietnamese unit in Chau Phu when it was overrun by Viet Cong forces on Jan. 31, 1968. Over the course of two days, Dix led rescue efforts that saved 14 civilians. He is credited with killing at least 14 Viet Cong, capturing 20 prisoners and 15 weapons. Dix is a member of Ketchikan Post 3.

**Nona Johnson**, a venerable Alaska veteran who served in the Marine Corps during World War II, became the first commander of the all-women’s American Legion Post 21 in Anchorage when it was formed in 1950. Active in the Legion for decades, Johnson returned for a second tour as post commander in 2000 on the 50th anniversary of the post’s founding. She died in August 2013.

**Jimmie L. Foster** served from 2010-2011 as the first American Legion national commander from Alaska. He was a service officer under Leon Bertram, the Legion’s top Alaska service officer at the time, as well as adjutant and commander of Spenard Post 28 in Anchorage, Alaska’s National Executive Committeeman and a member of many national commissions and committees.

**Moose appeal**

Alaska moose are the largest members of the deer family and the largest of North America’s moose subspecies. These super-sized creatures range from 800 to 1,600 pounds and can stand over six feet tall. Frequently seen across Alaska, occasionally even in the parking lots of American Legion post homes, the moose population climbs as high as 1,000 in Anchorage alone in the winter.

**Peggy Huber** made three attempts to get into the service before finally gaining enough weight to meet the Army’s 100-pound minimum in 1942. By the time she left the Army Nurse Corps in 1948, she had served in North Africa, Italy and the Philippines. She worked at Walter Reed Army Medical Center before arriving in Fairbanks in 1953. She and husband Russ, long-time members of Dorman H. Baker Post 11, helped start Boys State and Girls State and supported the program for decades. Huber presented the American Legion award to outstanding students until she was 95.

**Attractions in the Last Frontier**

- **The Healing Heart Totem Pole** — Erected on Prince of Wales Island in 1995, the totem pole was carved by the late Legionnaire Stan Marsden in honor of his son, who died of a cocaine overdose in 1991. Marsden carved the 46.5-foot tall totem pole out of a 500-year-old red cedar.
- **The Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel** — Also known as the Whittier Tunnel, it goes through Maynard Mountain south of Anchorage. At 2.5 miles, it is the longest combination highway and railway tunnel in North America. It was constructed at the behest of the Army after it established a post at nearby Whittier during World War II.
- **Mulcahy Stadium** — The turf at the Anchorage stadium was redone in 2009 with money raised by the American Legion.
- **Joinder Base Richardson-Elmendorf** — Also known as JBER, it was formed by the merger of Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage in 2010. Major units stationed here include the headquarters of the Alaska Command, Alaskan NORAD Region (AMR), the Eleventh Air Force, the 673rd Air Base Wing, the 4th Brigade Combat Team of the 25th Infantry Division and others.
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American Legion Baseball has been a force in Alaska since the mid-1940s. More than two-dozen teams are fielded statewide, making it possible for Anchorage – Alaska’s largest city – to have eight high school baseball teams. Now run under the auspices of the Alliance for the Support of American Legion Baseball, the program has produced 10 Major League Baseball draft picks in recent years and three notable pro players including Chad Bettis, Marshall Bose, and Chris Mabeus. American Legion Baseball in Alaska also has included dozens of players who went on to play college ball. That includes Lauren Frost, who played American Legion Baseball in Eagle River and went on to become an infielder on the Stanford University women’s softball team.

Black soldiers and the Alaska Highway

There might never have been an Alaska-Canadian highway if not for Pearl Harbor and contingents of African-American U.S. soldiers who were pulled from the South and tasked with building the most difficult portion of the wilderness road in bitterly frigid conditions.

Boosters had promoted a highway from northern Canada to Alaska since the 1920s. But it took the Japanese attack in December 1941 to finally persuade Congress to back a 1,500-mile road from Dawson Creek, B.C., to Big Delta, south of Fairbanks. The Aleutian Islands, in southwestern Alaska, were closer to Japan than any other place in North America. But there was no way to reach this far north-territory (statehood was more than a Herculean effort to connect Alaska to the rest of North America by road, the highway project helped demonstrate the skills and work ethic of black troops. Historians point to the project as one of the reasons Americans decided to de-segregate the military in 1948.

If it wasn’t for The American Legion, there wouldn’t be any high school baseball.

Rus Baker, Department of Alaska baseball chairman, on the Legion’s long-running work to fund high school baseball in Anchorage and keep the bases loaded throughout the summer with a seamless transition for players to Legion ball. Much of the funding comes from grants.

The American Legion awards many scholarships to college-bound Alaskans each year, including the Dick Johnson Memorial Scholarship, named to honor the long-time member of Susitna Valley Post 35 in Wasilla, available to students with 2.0 to 3.0 grade-point averages who would otherwise have a difficulty paying for college. Department scholarships also go to oratorical contestants and Boys State participants.

If you’re interested in joining The American Legion, visit the website where you can find a post near you.