



Pennsylvania VFWnews



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YOUR VFW: NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS!

State Convention Features Celebration, Information and Motivation



2017-18 State Commander Dwight R. Fuhrman takes the oath of office during the State Convention.

With the broadest mix of veterans ever to participate in a Pennsylvania VFW State Convention, the 2017 three-day event showcased the significant ways that VFW services and programs enhance life for veterans, military personnel and citizens. Convention delegates included comrades from service periods dating back to World War II and the Korean War, up through the newest generation of combat zone veterans.

Vietnam veterans still comprised the majority of the 350 convention participants. However, in a healthy sign for the VFW's future, the number of delegates representing Operations Deserts Storm and Shield, Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, and ongoing campaigns, is steadily rising.

This trend was also reflected in Department leadership photos taken shortly after the 2017-18 leaders were sworn. The State VFW leadership team includes over a dozen War on Terror veterans, including six female members.

This broadening of diversity in VFW leadership

Convention ... continued on page 4

The VFW's Future is Central Issue

Delegates' Action Addresses Smoking Issue in Private Clubs

Is the VFW's future brighter with a no-smoking policy for all private clubs in Pennsylvania or with the continuation of a State-approved exemption from the Commonwealth's Clean Indoor Air Act (CIAA) for fraternal organizations? Factors critical to the VFW's future breathe strong credibility to the importance of clearing the air on this matter.

This central issue was debated by VFW members at the Department's 98th State Convention in Pittsburgh in June. A clear two-thirds majority of the 300-plus VFW post delegates from across the state voted decisively to resolve the issue for the betterment of the VFW: it is time to ask State lawmakers to pass legislation removing the CIAA exemption that allows smoking in private clubs licensed by the State Liquor Control Board (LCB).

Two bills in the State Legislature would remove the exemption—House Bill 1309 and Senate Bill 519. Continuing the momentum created by the delegate vote, the Department started contacting State lawmakers to support these bills specifically to create an even "no smoking" playing field for all LCB license holders, including private clubs.

If signed into law, the legislation would not put VFW posts at a competitive disadvantage because it would remove smoking from all private clubs—all veterans groups and fraternal organizations commonly referred to as "animal clubs" (Moose, Elks, Eagles, etc.).

Business Lights Up After Smoking Voted Down

Many VFW posts have made the decision to end smoking inside their canteens without a legislative mandate. While some limited the change in policy to a short period due to an initial drop in business, many posts remained committed to a smoke-free approach. Most are reporting more business than ever, with new members joining the VFW.

At Red Lion Post 1446, "We unanimously voted to eliminate smoking based on the overall health of our members and their families," Quartermaster Terry Stokes said recently. "The initial transition was one of intense cleaning to rid the smell from the building. This was done within a week. After the signs were posted and members noticed the difference, word spread about our Post decision.

"After about four weeks, there was little discussion about the vote and we became known for no longer allowing smoking. We had members who left before because of the smoke in our dining area, who started coming in again. And, we gained about 12 members who appreciated our change to no smoking."

Quartermaster Stokes noted that food business increased from about 20% of total business to about 27% because of the increased number of members coming in.

No Smoking ... continued on page 10



Department membership awards: (from left) Post 7043 and Commander William Hewitt received the Commander's Award, the Robert Musser Memorial Award and the James E. Van Zandt Award; (Middle photo) Post 7842 Commander Robert Muser and Quartermaster Tim Watson earned "All State Captain" status; and (right) Post 7043 member George Fletcher won the Joe Salvo award for recruiting the most members (329). Also pictured in these photos are 2016-17 State Commander Tom Brown, Sr. Vice Commander Dwight Fuhrman, Jr. Vice Commander Tom Hanzes and Past National Commander-in-Chief Bill Thien.

PA Air Guardian Amanda Weigle Receives State VFW's Eagle Award



PA Air National Guard Senior Airman Amanda Weigle proudly holds a State VFW Eagle Award she received for distinguished service from then State Commander Thomas Brown. Also present were Past National Chief Bill Thien and ANG Col. Ray Hyland.



(Above, left photo) Outgoing State Commander Tom Brown congratulates District 22 Commander Mark Nelson for earning "All State District" honors, and (right) District 7 Membership Chairman William Daws for having the greatest district membership increase.

From the State Commander

If There is a Will, There is a Way—And “We Will!”

Dwight R. Fuhrman - dmfuhrman@comcast.net or (717) 255-2541



What a real honor it is to serve as your PA State Commander for the 2017-2018 year. Together, “We Will” accomplish our goals and make the PA Team proud of our year.

“We Will” and must retain, recruit and reinstate members. In addition, we must complete all our VFW programs and be sure to report them to VFW Community Service Chairman Bob Emerick.

Let’s prove to the public, our communities and politicians that we are indeed more than a smoky old VFW bar and grill.

100 bikes. Thank you to Duncansville, Sankertown, Coalport and Tyrone VFW’s for your hospitality. What an unforgettable ride. “Let Freedom Roar.”

What a proud showing of Pennsylvania pride we had at the National Convention in New Orleans. We had terrific attendance at our meetings and heard comments that PA could have had their own parade at the Patriotic Rally! Thank you to the Mechanicsburg Minutemen, our state color guard, as well as all of the brothers and sisters of the VFW and Auxiliary, who made PA proud in the parade of states.

Chief of Staff John Brenner and I attended the VFW State Baseball Teener League Championship Tournament. On the final day, we had a battle royale between the Altoona and Clearfield VFW teams. In just one game alone, 35 runs were scored.



Commander Fuhrman poses with the Clearfield VFW Teener Team during the State VFW Tournament. Also shown is Chief of Staff John Brenner and Post 1785 Commander John Rowles.

It is great that our PA VFW’s allow social members. But, we need to be sure that they know they are guests of the VFW and that the VFW is in charge of the canteen and all operations. Take care of social member problems and issues at your post level. If you need to suspend them for house rule infractions, then do it!

Thank you to Chairman Dwayne Anders and his team for the great Homeless Vets Bike Run in memory of his father, Gary. Marsha and I had a great weekend cruising through the country on our bike with 150 riders and nearly

statewide Post Officer Training events. We saw post officers from all over. Your Department appreciates everyone who gave up weekend time to discuss post issues. Your enthusiasm and participation in the breakout discussions was inspiring and commendable.

Remember, the image of the VFW is largely defined by how well you operate your post, how well you serve veterans and your community, and how well you support our military comrades.

“We Will” be VFW mission focused and service driven!



Leaders of Team Pennsylvania gather for a photo during the National Convention.

PA’s Own Earn National Recognition

The Pennsylvania Department salutes Post 1620 Commander Ricky Snyder, Post 7043 Commander William Hewitt and Post 7842 Commander Robert Moser, and District 22 Commander Mark Nelson, for reaching All-American status. Congratulations also to Post 7043 Quartermaster George Fletcher for earning the Department’s Joe Salvo Award and the National Recruiter of the Year Award.

Our outstanding Department performers are shown here on stage at the National Convention with Commander-in-Chief Brian Duffy.



District Meeting Schedule

AUGUST 2017

DIST.	LOCATION	DATE	TIME
14	VFW Post #6824 – Rome	Aug. 20, 2017	2:00 P.M.
19	VFW Post #464 – Oil City	Aug. 20, 2017	2:30 P.M.
20	VFW Post #294 – Albrightsville	Aug. 20, 2017	2:00 P.M.
21	VFW Post #7046 – Stewardstown	Aug. 27, 2017	2:00 P.M.
27	VFW Post #6743 – Jones Mills	Aug. 27, 2017	2:30 P.M.

SEPTEMBER 2017

1	Michael J. Crescenz – Phila. Center	Sept. 13, 2017	7:30 P.M.
7	VFW Post #7949 – Eddystone	Sept. 27, 2017	7:30 P.M.
8	VFW Post 6393 – Yardley	Sept. 17, 2017	1:30 P.M.
9	VFW Post #7418 – Gap	Sept. 10, 2017	2:00 P.M.
10	VFW Post #5544 – Jessup	Sept. 10, 2017	2:00 P.M.
11	VFW Post #8317 – Benton	Sept. 17, 2017	2:30 P.M.
12	VFW Post #1532 – Sunbury	Sept. 17, 2017	2:30 P.M.
15	VFW Post #6753 – Knoxville	Sept. 17, 2017	2:00 P.M.
16	VFW Post #5954 – Red Hill	Sept. 20, 2017	7:30 P.M.
17	VFW Post #34 – Newport	Sept. 10, 2017	2:00 P.M.
20	VFW Post #4714 – Northampton	Sept. 17, 2017	2:00 P.M.
22	VFW Post #43 - Martinsburg	Sept. 17, 2017	2:30 P.M.
23	VFW Post #21 – Connellsville	Sept. 10, 2017	2:00 P.M.
25	VFW Post #1821 – Aliquippa	Sept. 17, 2017	2:00 P.M.
26	VFW Post #4315 – Ashville	Sept. 10, 2017	2:30 P.M.
28	VFW Post #470 – Erie	Sept. 10, 2017	1:00 P.M.
29	VFW Post #914 – West Mifflin	Sept. 10, 2017	2:00 P.M.

OCTOBER 2017

1	Michael J. Crescenz Ctr. - Phila.	Oct. 11, 2017	7:30 P.M.
7	VFW Post #3460 – Media	Oct. 25, 2017	7:30 P.M.
14	VFW Post #8306 – Catawissa	Oct. 15, 2017	2:00 P.M.
16	VFW Post #3612 – Willow Grove	Oct. 18, 2017	7:30 P.M.
24	VFW Post #3491 – Carmichaels	Oct. 15, 2017	1:30 P.M.

NOTE: ALL POSTS MUST BE REPRESENTED AT DISTRICT MEETINGS. POST COMMANDERS WHO CANNOT ATTEND MUST APPOINT A POST REPRESENTATIVE TO ATTEND AND HAVE THAT PERSON SIGN IN.



AT YOUR SERVICE: MEMBERSHIP SUPPORTS BENEFITS ASSISTANCE



VFW Celebrates Passage of Forever GI Bill

WASHINGTON – The nearly 1.7 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliary are applauding President Trump for signing into law the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2017.

The new Forever GI Bill will have an unparalleled impact on America's service members, veterans and their families. The bill protects the benefits they've earned, expands access and eligibility, and properly recognizes

the long service and sacrifice of the one percent of Americans who have voluntarily put their personal lives on hold to fight an unimaginable multi-front war for almost 16 years.

"The VFW is proud to have played a key role in its creation and passage," said VFW National Commander Keith Harman, "because the new law comes none too soon for

more than 30 GI Bill recipients at a for-profit law school in Charlotte, N.C., that suddenly closed."

As with earlier for-profit school closures, the VFW is offering impacted student veterans "Unmet Needs" grants of up to \$5,000 to help them through the transition as their benefit and living stipend is restored.

The signing of the Post-9/11 GI Bill in 2008 was the culmination of a decade's worth of effort by the VFW to fight for a new education benefit.

Purple Heart recipients without the requisite three years of active service received partial benefits. Veterans attending schools that closed were left with credits they couldn't transfer or complete their degrees.

"With Congress, we corrected deficiencies so all who are eligible will get the greatest educational benefit for vets," said Harman



Please Participate in PA's Veterans Registry

The **Pennsylvania Veterans Registry** is an online application that allows veterans, family members and people who work with veterans to connect with the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to request information related to valuable state benefits, programs and services.

All registrants' information will be shared with County Directors for Veterans Affairs and Commonwealth agencies to facilitate local connections.

By connecting with DMVA,



registrants can receive timely communications like newsletters, press releases and updates.

The registry is a step in the DMVA's strategy to expand communication with veterans and persons who support them. Visit the web page <https://register.dmva.pa.gov/>

VA Benefit News & Other Important Health Updates

This information is provided by the PA VFW Veterans Service Officer program. For an appointment call (717) 234-7927. State HQ thanks the State of PA for Act 66 grant funds.

DETERMINE COST OF HEALTH CARE

Many veterans qualify for cost-free health care services based on a compensable service-connected condition or other qualifying factors.

COPAYS - Some veterans may be required to pay a copay for treatment of their nonservice-connection conditions. While some veterans qualify for free health care based on certain eligibilities, most will be required to complete a financial assessment at the time of enrollment to determine whether they are eligible for enrollment and for free health care services. If the veteran's gross household (including spouse and dependents, if applicable) income exceeds the VA income limits, the veteran may be required to pay a copay for health care services.

FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT & INCOME VERIFICATION

- Most veterans not receiving VA compensation or pension payments must complete a financial assessment at the time of enrollment to determine if they qualify for free healthcare. Most non-service connected and non-compensable 0% service connected veterans who report their total gross household income under VA's Income limits may be subject to income verification.

PRIVATE HEALTH CARE INSURANCE - Providing health insurance information may reduce or eliminate copays. Veterans with health insurance may choose to use their private health insurance to supplement their VA benefits. Payments from private health insurance usually cover copay expenses for VA healthcare. Having private health insurance does not affect eligibility for VA care.

OUTPATIENT COPAYS -

- Primary Care Services: \$15;
- Specialty Care Services: \$50; and
- Medications - Veterans in Priority Group 1 do not pay for medications.

EFFECTIVE FEB. 27, 2017 - Veterans in Priority Groups 2-8 must pay for each 30-day or less supply of medication for treatment of nonservice-connected condition (unless otherwise exempt).

INPATIENT COPAYS - There are two inpatient copay rates, the full rate and the reduced rate. Priority Group 7 and certain other veterans are responsible for paying 20 percent of the copay rate.

- Inpatient Copay for the first 90 days of care during a 365-day period - 257.60;
- Inpatient Copay for each additional 90 days of care during 365-day period - \$128.00; and
- Daily Charge - \$2/day.

Priority Group 8 and certain other veterans are responsible for VA's full inpatient copay rate.

- Inpatient Copay for the first 90 days of care during a 365-day period - \$1,288.00;
- Inpatient Copay for each additional 90 days of care during a 365-day period - \$644; and
- Daily Charge - \$10/day.

Veterans living in high cost areas may qualify for a reduced inpatient copay rate. Contact VA toll-free at 877-222-VETS (8387).

Veterans can use the Health Benefits Explorer

to see what copays may apply to their care plan.

GERIATRICS AND EXTENDED CARE - Long-term care copays are based on three levels of care:

- Inpatient: Up to \$97 per day (Community Living (Nursing home), Respite, Geriatric Evaluation);
- Outpatient: \$15 per day (Adult Day Health Care, Respite, Geriatric Evaluation); and
- Domiciliary: \$5 per day.

**Copayments for long-term care services start on the 22nd day of care during any 12-month period — there is no copayment requirement for the first 21 days. Actual copayment charges will vary from veteran to veteran depending upon financial information submitted on VA Form 10-10EC.

EXEMPTION FROM COPAYS - Some veterans qualify for free care and/or prescriptions based on

special factors including but not limited to:

- Former Prisoner of War status;
- 50% or more compensable VA service-connected disabilities

(0-40% compensable service connected may take copay test to determine prescription copay status). and

- Veterans deemed catastrophically disabled.

SERVICES EXEMPT FROM COPAYS -

- Special registry examinations offered by VA to evaluate possible health risks associated with military service;
- Military sexual trauma care and counseling;
- Compensation and Pension examinations;
- Care that is part of a VA research project;
- Care related to a service-connected disability;
- Readjustment counseling and related mental health services
- Care for cancer of head/neck caused by nose or throat radium treatments in the military;
- Individual or Group Smoking Cessation or Weight Reduction services;
- Publicly announced VA public health initiatives, for example, health fairs;
- Care potentially related to combat service for Veterans that served in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998;
- Laboratory and electrocardiograms; and
- Hospice care.

RECENT COMBAT VETERANS

Combat veterans who served in combat after the Gulf War or in combat against a hostile force after Nov. 11, 1998, are eligible for free care for five years for any illness that may be related to their military service beginning on the date of discharge. These vets are now eligible for another year of eligibility based on the Clay Hunt Act.

These combat veterans are not required to provide their income for care related to their service in the theater of operations; however, they may complete the financial assessment to determine their eligibility for a higher priority status in the VA health care system, eligibility for beneficiary travel benefits, or for cost-free care for treatment not related to their military service.



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to the principle of informed and active patriotism, working to keep us strong and free.

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Convention ... from page 1

and membership was one of the many developments celebrated at the convention. Frequent applause was given when guest speakers lauded the VFW for its commitment to, and effectiveness in, taking care of combat zone veterans of all ages, military families, persons in need and entire communities.



“The VFW is a premier organization doing so much for veterans, and your mission is admirable... Your volunteerism is absolutely fantastic and your voice is very important. When (the VFW) speaks, people listen, especially legislators. You are an important constituency to all lawmakers. You must tell them what issues are important to veterans.”
- PA Veterans Affairs DAG Eric Weller

Motivation from Past Chief Thien

William A. Thien, who served as VFW commander-in-chief during 2013-14, delivered inspiring words to motivate newly installed Department officers, chairpersons and delegates to push VFW service and growth to a higher level. He also urged leaders to involve members from all service periods—and all VFW experience grades—in state, district and local VFW activities.

“You can sit in any meeting, at any level within our organization, and

say, ‘There could be a future VFW commander-in-chief in this room,’” said Thien, who served in the U.S. Navy from 1969 to 1974, and five years in the Indiana National Guard. “This is where our post, district, department and national commanders and officers come from as well as our chairpersons.

“We also need to attract new members who bring their energy, ideas and service-

driven dedication to the VFW. We are very much a grassroots organization, which means that we need to increase our ranks to be strong locally. We need to nurture new or less experienced members about why our mission is important for veterans, our troops and our communities. This is where tomorrow’s VFW leaders will come from.”

Guest Speakers Praise VFW

PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Deputy Adjutant General Eric G. Weller briefed Convention

“You can sit in any meeting, at any level in our organization, and say, ‘There could be a future commander-in-chief in this room’ ... This is where our post, district, department and national officers come from as well as our chairpersons.

We also need to attract new members who bring their energy, ideas and service-driven dedication into the VFW.”

- Past VFW National Chief William Thien



delegates about State benefits for 900,000 veterans who live in the Commonwealth. DMVA continues to expand outreach so more veterans know about and utilize benefits like six State veterans homes.

He praised the VFW for its strong support of troops and veterans.

“The VFW is a premier organization doing so much for veterans, and your mission is admirable,” said Weller, a VFW life member, who retired after more than 35 years of service including participation in classified missions during operations in Grenada, Panama, Iraq, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan. “Your volunteerism is absolutely fantastic and your voice is very important.

“When (the VFW) speaks, people listen—especially legislators,” noting that since 1971 the percent of federal lawmakers who were veterans has fallen from 73% to under 20%. “So you are an important constituency to all lawmakers. You must tell them what issues are

important to veterans.

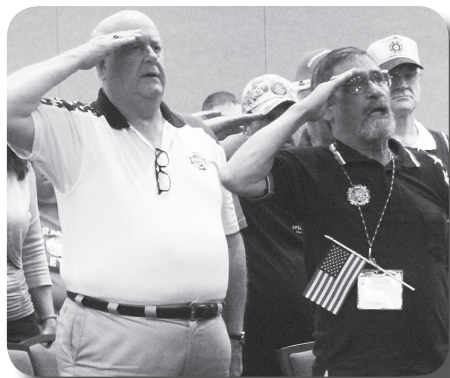
“You have to keep your membership strong to keep your voice strong. There is still a lot of untapped membership potential in the National Guard, since more than 35,000 have become eligible for VFW membership since the War on Terror started.”

Other convention speakers included Freedom’s Foundation President Michael DiYeso, Coatesville VAMC Karen Elechko, MSN/RN, Pittsburgh Vet Center Outreach Specialist Ryan Ahl, and Humana representatives Susan Shern and Michael Jones.

During their remarks, Department officers and program chairpersons encouraged posts of all sizes to participate in VFW programs and services that show the real impact of the organization’s mission.

These core initiatives are designed so every post—regardless of membership

Convention ... see next page



Proud VFW members salute the colors of the nation during the Patriotic Rally.



Delegates listen to discussion during the general session.



State Commander Dwight Fuhrman and the VFW 2017-18 Council of Administration are sworn into office.



One of many donations, Post 464 Commander Jason Reed (center) presents \$10,000 for the PA Wounded Warriors to State Adjutant/Quartermaster John Getz (left) and incoming State Commander Dwight Fuhrman.



Bradford Post 212 Quartermaster Charles Beattie accepts a National Certificate of Recognition for his Post support of troops from Veterans and Military Support Chairperson for PA, Sandy Showalter.



PA VFW Health Care Award Chairperson PSC Ruth Fairchild (left) honors Karen Elechko, MSN/RN, who is the Coordinator of Coatesville VAMC’s Mobile Golden Memory Clinic. Chairperson Fairchild and outgoing State Commander Thomas Brown praised Karen for her ongoing efforts to bring a mobile VA van to veterans across southeastern PA.

State Commander's Testimonial Weekend is Nov. 10-11, Gettysburg

State Commander Dwight R. Fuhrman will be the guest of honor at the Commander's Testimonial Weekend scheduled for Friday and Saturday, November 10-11 at the Wyndham, Gettysburg.

Festivities will begin on Friday Night with "Jakey's Night Out," which will include a buffet dinner, D.J., an Amish attire contest and cash bar beginning at 6:00.

Saturday Morning, November 11, will feature a "VETERANS DAY" parade forming at 8 and moving out at 8:45 around the hotel complex. All color guards, marching bands, small floats, motorcycles, golf carts, Pedi-bikes, golf carts, etc., are welcome. Those unable to walk will be provided transportation. After the parade, a "Tribute to Veterans Day" will be held.

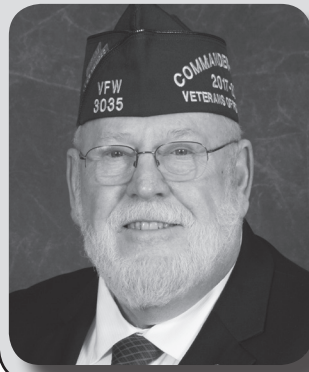
Support from all districts, posts and auxiliaries to make Veterans Day 2017 a huge success for State Commander Fuhrman will be appreciated.

Saturday Night's Black-Tie Banquet will begin with a cash bar at 6:00 P.M. and dinner served at 7:00 P.M.

Please watch for the Testimonial mailing, which will have reservation forms including hotel, Friday and Saturday Night events, and Ad Book entries.

Event information is available on both the VFW Department and Department Auxiliary websites.

Vietnam Veteran Keith Harman Elected as VFW National Commander



The Veterans of Foreign Wars concluded its 118th National Convention with the election of Keith Harman of Delphos, Ohio, as its new national commander. Harman served in the U.S. Army from 1967 to 1969, including service in Vietnam as a crew chief and door gunner on Huey helicopters.

During his acceptance speech, he spoke highly of the nearly 1.7 million members of VFW and its Auxiliary, citing the members' camaraderie as the driving force to the VFW's success. "Every member of our organization has walked the talk, and every member of our great Auxiliary has lived the fear of having a loved one downrange. I believe in what the VFW stands for—to take care of veterans, service members and their families—and I am honored to lead it," he said.

With the demand, "Sequestration must end!", Keith made clear during his remarks ending sequestration will again top the VFW legislative agenda.

Dept. Mourns Passing of Georgia Snook

With extremely heavy hearts, staff at State Headquarters announced the passing of Executive Secretary Georgia Snook in July, after she lost her courageous battle with cancer at the age of 41.

She fought her illness hard through extensive treatment, and had hoped to return to continue working for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Georgia worked at State HQ from 2008. She enjoyed interaction with veterans at the office and at events she helped to coordinate. Her responsibilities included working with State leadership, chairpersons and post officials to support VFW student scholarships, JROTC, VFW Baseball, internal affairs and numerous other programs.

State HQ continues to reach out to her husband—retired PAARNG Warrant Officer 5 Lenny Snook—to offer assistance and support.



Pictured after the Installation of Officers at the State Convention are members of the Department's Council of Administration (right) consisting of Line Officers and District Commanders; and State Sergeants-at-Arms, Membership Recruiters and Program Chairpersons (left).

Convention ... from page 4

size—can become involved in projects that serve all sectors of the veteran, military and citizen populations.

Department Leaders Installed

Spring Grove resident Dwight R. Fuhrman of Post 8896 was elected State VFW Commander. Vietnam War veteran Fuhrman earned the Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with 60 Device, two Overseas Bars, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the National Defense Service Medal and expert ratings in the use of the M-16 rifle and hand grenade.

Commander Fuhrman encouraged VFW leaders to mentor members with less experience so they can broaden their knowledge about the VFW and be prepared to hold leadership positions.

"A World War II veteran mentored me so I was ready to become active in the VFW, then I ran for post junior vice commander. We need younger veterans to support our organization, but we also need to develop them into proud volunteers and effective leaders. And through their military training, they have the training

and technology that can help them succeed as VFW members and leaders."

Commander Fuhrman's line officers include Vietnam veteran and Greenville resident Thomas M. Hanzes of Post 7599, State Jr. Vice Commander; Vietnam veteran and Valencia resident Wayne D. Perry of Post 7505, State Jr. Vice Commander; Vietnam veteran and Ephrata resident John B. Getz, Jr., (PSC) of Post 3376, State Quartermaster and re-appointed as State Adjutant; and Vietnam veteran and Mt. Wolf resident.

Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran and Drexel Hill resident Frank McGovern of Post 3460, was elected State Judge Advocate; Vietnam veteran and Johnstown resident Nelson Lowes of Post 6743, State Surgeon; Vietnam veteran and Langhorne resident Peter Hook of Post 6393, State Chaplain; Vietnam veteran and North Abington Township resident Michael McLane of Post 7069, was appointed State Inspector; and John A. Brenner (PSC) of Post 2493, was appointed State Chief of Staff and Department Parliamentarian.

Conneaut Lake resident Bob Eiler of Post 7842 was re-elected to a four-

year term as the Pennsylvania VFW's representative on the National Council of Administration.

Celebration of Mission Successes

Citing strong participation in VFW programs and services that impact thousands of lives daily, Department leaders and chairpersons presented many awards to persons—both inside and outside of the VFW—for their outstanding service (see page 9 and photos in this issue).

PA VFW Eagle Award recipient Amanda Weigle, 27, a senior airman with the PA Air National Guard, summed up the importance of the VFW as a supporter of veterans and military personnel: "I am truly honored to receive this award from the VFW. Being at the VFW State Convention was an incredible opportunity to connect with veterans from many generations and conflicts to learn from some of their experiences.

"The entire award experience reiterated to me how important an organization the VFW is to veterans, and I hope to see its work continue long into the future."

Convention delegates left Pittsburgh

inspired and equipped to lead their VFW posts into another year of supporting, "No One Does More for Veterans."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Photos from all Convention events can be found on the Department's Flickr page. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pavfw>

Vietnam Traveling Wall Coming to Waynesburg

Waynesburg VFW Post 4793 is spearheading efforts to bring the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall to its town, according to Post Sr. Vice Commander Richard Black, chairman of the event committee.

The program, which includes a celebration for the VFW's birthday, will recognize those who made the ultimate sacrifice during the war.

Activities will run Sept. 28-Oct. 1, at the Greene County Fairgrounds.

Opening ceremonies will be Sept. 28, at 6 p.m. A veterans recognition Ceremony is scheduled for the Sept. 30 at 1 p.m. A patriotic concert will be held Oct. 1, at 3 p.m., followed by the closing ceremony.

Focus on Mission Success



Chalfont Post 3258 adopted the HHC 55th Brigade Support Battalion, Pennsylvania Army National Guard, located in Perkasie. Pictured here (from left) are Post Commander Woody Hippel, Captain Michael Gursky and First Sergeant Zebulon Zellers. Post 3258 has a long and proud history of supporting military units.



Department leaders continued a tradition of attending a ceremony recognizing the anniversary of the World War II Battle of Midway in June at the Naval Support Activity Supply Depot in Mechanicsburg. Shown (from left) are Naval Supply Systems Commander Rear Admiral Jon Yuen, District 21 Commander Scott Fritz, State Commander Thomas Brown and State Adjutant John Getz. PA VFW leaders also attended a change of command ceremony at the depot a few weeks later.



Annually, Indiana Post 1989 awards three scholarship grants of \$3,000 each. The recipients have to demonstrate a commitment to higher education. This year's winners are: Robert Bell, Jr., Anna Overman and Jack Marshall. The awards were presented by Post Officers at a dinner honoring the recipients and their families. Shown with the scholarship winners are Commander Alan Hicks and Quartermaster Herb Gleditsch.



Members of Punxsutawney Post 2076 traveled to Virginia Beach to donate a scooter to the Military Aviation Museum. Present were (left to right): Quartermaster/Adjutant Bob Lott, Post Judge Advocate Jim Davis, Senior Vice Commander Jim Pallone, Post Surgeon Wally Hurd, Post Chaplain Ray Depp and Junior Vice Commander Duane Miller. Seated on the scooter is Museum Director Mike Potter, who is joined in the back row by volunteer guide Mark Norder.



At York Post 8951, State Safety Chairman Ron Smith presented the State VFW EMT Award to Donald J. Sanders, Jr. (third from left). Sanders also received a National VFW Safety Award from District and Post Officer Rick Olivitt. Also shown are Ted Hake, White Rose Ambulance (WRA) EVP Debbie Arvin and WRA President/Owner James B. Arvin.



VFW member and VAVS volunteer Walter Debes received a plaque for 50 years of service at the Philadelphia Michael J. Crescenz VA Hospital. A large group of volunteers, VFW representatives and VA staff joined Walter to celebrate this tremendous achievement. Congratulations, Walter, for serving thousands of hospitalized veterans through your service at the Crescenz VAMC.

Focus on Mission Success



The Department once again held a special event for women veterans in Pennsylvania. This group photo shows participants during a break in the program which provided helpful information and opportunities to enjoy camaraderie.



Etters Post 537 presented Dana Miller with its VA Healthcare Employee of the Year Award. Shown are Post Sr. Vice Commander Ron Reinecker, Ms. Miller, who has worked in Veterans Affairs healthcare positions since 2012, and Commander Joe Colonna.



State HQ held its annual "U.S. Loyalty Day" event at the State Capitol on May 1. Highlights included PA Adjutant General Tony Carrelli as the keynote speaker and the presentation of Commonwealth of PA resolutions.



Erie Post 470's Auxiliary earned a second-place finish in the National VFW Buddy Poppy Display Contest with a very effective visual demonstration of how Agent Orange was used in Vietnam.



Mechanicsburg Post 7530 hosted a Gold Star Mothers breakfast recently in part to honor the family of a serviceman killed in a military training accident. Pictured are (from left): then District 18 Sr. Vice Commander Ricky Snyder; State/National Chaplain Peter Hook; Dean and Beverly Faircloth, Gold Star Parents of USMC CPL Jonathan Dean Faircloth; Gene Arnold, Chaplain of Post 7530 and District 18; WWII veteran William A Caparella; and his daughter, Vicki Caparella of the PA Wounded Warriors. The event also recognized the Chapel of Four Chaplains organization.

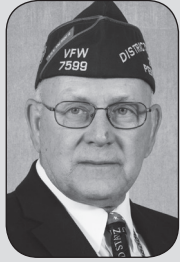


District 28 Commander Donald Ramsey and Hickory VFW Post 6166 Commander David Darby present the VFW Youth Certificate of Merit Award to 8th grade student Payton Mele. The award presentation took place at Hickory High School ceremony. Payton received the award for patriotism, loyalty, character and honesty.



Training, Dedication & Service Creates Success

Thomas "Ace" Hanzes, State Sr. Vice Cmdr. - thomashanzes@yahoo.com



I am blessed and honored to serve as your State Senior Vice Commander for our Department!

Thank you everyone for your support, past and present! I have so much to learn and I am ready to do so.

We had outstanding attendance for our PA VFW at National Convention in New Orleans! So many dedicated comrades made the long trip for a strong turn out. It was enjoyable and informational.

I also enjoyed seeing Department leadership at our annual Flying Squadron training program, as well as many post representatives at our statewide Post Officer Training Institutes. Remember, we ALL learn from training sessions. The more we learn and work together to complete our programs, the more we make ours the best department possible!

Congratulations to newly elected State Commander Dwight Fuhrman. I

am honored to serve on his leadership team. "WE WILL" have a fantastic and productive year!

Congratulations to newly elected Junior Vice Commander Wayne Perry, and all district commanders. It will be a pleasure serving with all of you as well.

As I look forward, I see a vast amount of good things for the VFW and the Department of Pennsylvania. There also are many challenges ahead, but I know we are ready to meet them!

I have met so many great comrades at posts doing wonderful things. Our State VFW has so many success stories, and community service creates opportunities for many of those mission victories.

Thank you for five great years as Community Service Chairman. I have met so many great comrades at posts doing wonderful things.

Our State VFW has so many success stories, and community service creates opportunities for many of those mission victories. I know the new chairman, Robert Emerick (robert.emerick5566@yahoo.com), will do a super job.

How fortunate I am to serve for the Department of PA! I promise to give my best.

Always remember, "*The VFW- NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.*"



Membership Moment

Recruiting 101: Reach Out and Engage

Henry R. Mannella, State Membership Chair - h.mannella72@yahoo.com



Some of our VFW comrades are uncomfortable with recruiting others to join. Some just think it is up to post officers to bring in the next generation of members.

The simple fact is that recruiting requires just a few small, simple steps that lead to chances to ask, "*Would you join the VFW and help us continue our mission of service?*"

All member organizations have a niche—a common bond among their members that inspires them to carry out a mission. You know you have something in common with others who served overseas. Use that bond to create opportunities to talk, share stories and begin friendships.

Watch for veterans wearing ball caps, t-shirts and other apparel announcing that they have earned the right to be a VFW member. Attend events where military and veterans gather and offer your support.

Shake hands, say "*Thanks for your service,*" and ask them about their service. Share how VFW membership has made your life better. Then ask, "*Would you like to join the VFW to help us serve veterans, our troops and our communities?*"

Sometimes we make recruiting sound harder than it needs to be. Think about

how you started your VFW membership. Someone took the step to make you feel welcome enough that you wanted to join.

To the issue of "recruiting is just for post officers," the VFW grew into the most successful combat zone veterans group because all members cared enough about their comrades to ask them to join.

Like your military service, the role you filled was important to the success of your unit. The same thing goes in the VFW.

We are experiencing a very concerning downward trend in membership. Yes, some of our losses are due to older members passing away. But trust me, there are plenty of eligible veterans out there to stop this freefall. We only have about 20% of eligible members in our ranks today.

Recruiting is all about relationships that start with handshakes, words of support and forging bonds that benefit everyone.

We say we care about veterans and that "*No One Does More for Veterans.*" Do we mean it? Then let's live out these credos!

Your concern for other veterans and your willingness to share your VFW experience with them will help us add new members to our ranks.

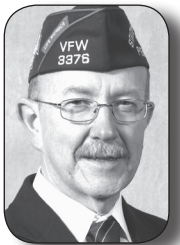
Please review the contests in the 2017-18 Membership Program. Check out the incentives for you and your post. Please invest some time and energy to bring in a new member or two. Each one counts!



Facts and Figures

Financial Integrity Improves Your Post's Image

John B. Getz, Jr. - State Adjutant/Quartermaster - adjutant@vfwpahq.org



The new fiscal year has started, and we appreciate your continued hard work to ensure that the VFW mission and programs continue to serve veterans, our troops and our neighbors.

I encourage all post trustees to review their important responsibilities, and to carry these loss prevention steps out with every post audit. It is imperative to the image of the VFW and operational integrity of your post that trustees go over the books and bank accounts to make sure all funds are accurately reported.

As a trustee, you must be vigilant watching over post records. Be diligent in your examination of post funds. If you are expected or urged to just sign your name on post audits, give me a call and we will make sure your officers know that you are just trying your best to be a financial watchdog for your VFW post.

The Trustees Report of Audit has one change this year: we do not need to

report the dues reserve fund because this requirement has been removed from our By-Laws. You still need to report the balance of your post relief fund, which can be used only for the welfare of others—your comrades who need help. This fund is not a slush fund, and your audit should accurately report the strength of this fund.

I have been getting calls from members who ask to review their posts' financial records, but are being told by the quartermaster that they cannot do so. ANY REGULAR MEMBER is entitled to see the financial records of the post and home association. Remember that transparency of financial records helps prevent problems or distrust among the ranks.

One media story about stolen post funds hurts all VFW posts. Let's prevent it!

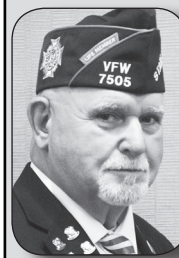
We are all here to work as a team. If we keep that "teamwork" perspective, all aspects of post operation will be better than one or two people running the show. One or two people cannot do everything, nor should they try to control everything.

Thank you for all you do for veterans and their families.



We Have the VFW Resources to Succeed

Wayne Perry, State Jr. Vice Cmdr. - wayper@zoominternet.net



In order to keep Pennsylvania as the best Department in this great VFW organization, post and district leaders have to work together as one team.

This teamwork must include working with our Department committee program chairpersons.

This means getting our reports in on time to document your hard work and to be eligible for recognition in our contests. Working hard on programs that benefit your community help show eligible members and others that your post is an active, life enhancing organization.

Putting a consistent Buddy Poppy program into motion honors our deceased veterans, raises funds to help needy veterans and reminds citizens about the sacrifices veterans have made to keep our nation free.

Post leaders, you have an

outstanding team of Department program chairpersons waiting for you to connect with them to participate in VFW programs.

Creating a membership committee to work on retention and recruitment will generate results with some hard work and outreach. We all know new members usually don't just walk in; we must get out and explain how the VFW supports them. We have a membership team ready to assist.

District commanders, please keep track of which posts are attending district meetings. If you notice some posts are not showing up, please contact the commander to see if they are experiencing problems. The Department has resources available to help them to move forward.

Commander Fuhrman has appointed me as a district commander advisor again this year. So if you have problems, please feel free to contact me.

Working together, "We Will" get the job done for Commander Fuhrman.

2016-17 Dept. of PA VFW Award Winners

MEMBERSHIP CONTESTS

ALL-AMERICAN POSTS: (RECEIVING THIS LEVEL OF RECOGNITION REQUIRES ALL-STATE HONORS):
Post Commander/Quartermaster

Post 1620 - Cmdr. Ricky Snyder/QM Angela Childers
Post 7043 - Cmdr. William Hewitt/QM William Dubler
Post 7842 - Cmdr. Robert Moser/QM Tim Watson

ALL-AMERICAN & ALL-STATE DISTRICT:
District 22 - Cmdr. Mark Nelson/QM Larry English

CAPTAINS ALL-STATE TEAM:

Post 7842 Cmdr. - Robert Moser
Post 7842 QM. - Tim Watson

CHOSNYK PLAQUE: (GREATEST PERCENTAGE INCREASE NEW/REINSTATED AMONG DISTRICTS):

District 7 Cmdr. - William Daws

POST 7043, WITH CMDR. WILLIAM HEWITT AND QM. WILLIAM DUBLER LEADING THE WAY. EARNED THESE AWARDS—

COMMANDER'S PLAQUE (HIGHEST INCREASE AMONG POSTS): 365 members

ROBERT MUSSER MEMORIAL PLAQUE (GREATEST POST PERCENTAGE INCREASE BY APRIL 30): 180.79%

VAN ZANDT AWARD (MOST NEW/REINSTATED POST MEMBERS AS % OF MEMBERSHIP): 47.50%

JOE SALVO AWARD (INDIVIDUAL MEMBER SIGNING UP THE MOST NEW/REINSTATED MEMBERS OVER 25):

George Fletcher, 329 new members recruited

ALL-STATE POSTS

Post/Location/Commander/Quartermaster

43 Martinsburg: Wade Fix/Charles McGeary
148 Harrisburg: Joseph Staudt/Robert Ketchem
212 Bradford: Ronald Peters/Charles Beattie
464 Oil City: Jason Reed/Patrick Winger
1132 Kane: David Swanson/Russell Counts
1597 Croydon: John Lynch/Thomas Goodman
1620 Middletown: Ricky Snyder/Angela Childers
1754 Huntingdon: Tammy McClain/Willard Stewart
1785 Clearfield: John Rowles/Edward Neeper
2385 Gratz: John Ransom/Glen Welker
3258 Chalfont: Elwood Hippel/Lawrence Duchnowski
3376 Ephrata: Alan Armstrong/Amy MacKenzie
5207 Daleville: John Croom/William Lamond
6231 Slippery Rock: Damian Hambley/Larry Pifer
7043 Coalport: William Hewitt/William Dubler
7842 Linesville: Robert Moser/Tim Watson
8675 Troy: William Struble/Robert Smith
8724 Duncansville: Richard Dively/Dwayne Anders

DEPT. SCHOLARSHIP CONTESTS

Voice of Democracy Winner - Haley Butina of Tyrone, representing Post 4559/District 22 ; *VOD* Teacher of the Year - West Mifflin Teacher Melissa Fulmer, representing Post 914/District 29; *Patriot's Pen* - Annika Sullivan, representing Post 3460/District 7.

DANIEL GIEGER SCHOLARSHIP

A \$500 scholarship for pursuing higher learning: Paige Hepner of Shamokin Dam, sponsored by Post 6631.

ANNUAL VFW SAFETY AWARDS

"PA VFW John Radko Police Officer of the Year" - Police Chief George McClay of Morrisville, sponsored by Yardley VFW Post 6393/District 8.

"PA VFW EMT of the Year" - Donald J. Sanders, Jr., of York, sponsored by West York VFW Post 8951/District 21

"PA VFW Firefighter of the Year" - Tony E. Albright of Shippensburg, sponsored by Chambersburg VFW Post 1599/District 18.



DEPT. EAGLE SCOUT AWARD

Greensburg Eagle Scout Jason S. Bush, PA VFW Scout of the Year Award, sponsored by Post 211/District 27; Joshua Weltner of Evans City finished second, VFW Post 499/District 25; and Charles R. Boone of Pittsburgh finished third, VFW Post 1810/District 29.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARDS

PA VFW Citizenship Education Teachers of the Year: Grades 6-8: Holicong Middle School Teacher Michelle Ambrosini of Doylestown, Post 175; Grades 9-12: Cedar Cliff H.S. Teacher Frank Hancock of Camp Hill, Post 537.

BUDDY POPPY AWARDS

State Convention Display Contests:

Category 1 - 1st Place: Post 5754; Category #2 - 1st Place: Post 470, 2nd Place: Auxiliary 2385, 3rd Place: VFW Auxiliary Post 7689; Category 3 - 1st Place: Auxiliary Post 6704, 2nd Place: Auxiliary Post 8951, 3rd Place: Auxiliary Post 5507. Congratulations to Post 470 Auxiliary for receiving a Second-Place Award from the National organization for its Buddy Poppy display.

COMMUNICATIONS CONTESTS

Post Newsletter - First - Chalfont Post 3258, Editor William Malone; Second - Shellsville Post 9639, Editor Michael Stephens

District Newsletter - First - District 16, Editor Earl Colella
Post Website - First - Chalfont Post 3258; Second - Spring Grove Post 5265

National Awards - PA VFW Public Affairs Director David Sandman earned the Grand Award for best feature story in Department papers. *PA VFW News* earned a Bronze Award in the Department Publications Contest.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

Record Books: 1st place - Folsom Post 928; 2nd - Middletown Post 1620; 3rd - Greensburg Post 33.

CONTEST 1 (Posts with membership over 551)

Category 1: Chambersburg 1599, Meadville 2006, West York 8951; **Category 2:** Shippensburg 6168, Downingtown 845, Folsom 928; **Category 3:** Towanda 1568, Jersey Shore 5859, Waynesburg 4793; **Category 4:** Kane 1132, Martinsburg 43, Chalfont 3258.

CONTEST 2 (Districts with 100% participation)
Districts 10, 13, 14, 16, 18, 21, 28 and 29

CONTEST 3 (Community Service Record Books)
First Place - Huntingdon Post 1754, Second Place - Folsom Post 928, Third Place - Middletown 1620.

CONTEST 4 (Posts submitting 10 or more reports)
Posts by Districts - 928, 3460, 7213, 175, 3258, 6393, 6493, 3376, 3575, 7362, 6615, 8317, 5655, 6223, 8306, 7155, 1754, 6631, 7463, 6704, 8851, 1446, 1599, 8896, 8951, 8724, 3491, 4793, 8106, 1989, 4843, 7605, 92, 470, 2006, 3374 and 7599.

Changing of the Guard at Bangor Post 739

Congratulations to Nick Alfero, Jr., who at the age of 28, recently became the youngest Commander in Bangor Post 739 history, as reported in the *Blue Valley Times*.

He is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom, when he served in Afghanistan with the U.S. Marine Corps. In 2008, after graduating high school, Alfero joined the Marines as a combat engineer. He served with 1st CEB out of Camp Pendleton, Ca. He deployed to Afghanistan in support of 3rd Battalion 5th Marines (3/5 Darkhorse) in Sangin, Helmand Province.

Nick left active duty in 2012 and went into the reserves in 2014. He joined the VFW in 2011, has served as a Post officer since 2013 and has been on the home association board since 2012. During his Commander's installation ceremony, Alfero proudly posed for photos with the Post's oldest living Commander, 93-year-old World War II veteran Donald Jones.



Chaplain's Corner

Chaplain of the Year: Timothy McCracken

Rev. Peter Hook, Chaplain - peterhook@verizon.net



The State VFW Chaplain of the Year Award recognizes a district or post chaplain who demonstrates a commitment to the ministry and duties of a chaplain, and who exhibits exemplary performance above and beyond normal expectations.

The recipient of the Chaplain of the Year Award for 2017 is Mr. Tim McCracken, Chaplain at the SSG. Albert E. Moss, Jr. Memorial Post 7842 in Linesville.

Tim was nominated for the award by Post 7842 Commander Bob Moser and then District 28 Commander Joe Benacci.

Post Commander Moser stated that Chaplain McCracken "is a regular fixture at our monthly meetings, always arriving early to ensure the hall is in proper order, briefs the Officers, completes his monthly Chaplain's Report and updates our sick call board. He is accessible to our members and local veterans in need of assistance, a visit, or moral support."

Chaplain McCracken visits the Erie Veterans Medical Center and the Erie Soldiers and Sailors home monthly. His face is also a familiar sight to employees and residents of Lilac Springs and Westbury Assisted Care Facilities. Chaplain McCracken was also instrumental in beginning a

Post program which sends \$30 gas cards monthly to the Erie Veterans Medical Center, for veterans when traveling to find employment.



Linesville Post 7842 Chaplain Tim McCracken holds the Chaplain of the Year certificate, with State Chaplain Peter Hook and Assistant Sgt.-at-Arms Jim Ritchie assisting.

Tim is a Marine who served in Vietnam from 1969-1970.

It was truly an honor for me to present this award to Tim, a true servant and model for those of us who are called to serve those who served. The Chaplain of the Year receives a framed certificate and a VFW watch. He also gains possession of a framed picture to be displayed at his Post for the coming year.

On the Department website—<http://www.vfwpahq.org>—you will find my Chaplain's Page, which has information concerning the award, the Monthly Chaplain's Report and various resources to help comrades.

No Smoking ... from page 1

"People told us that they enjoyed the improved air quality and overall cleanliness of our facility," added Stokes. "We have no problem recruiting social or Post members with the no-smoking policy.

"I believe most posts would see similar results, but they have to let some time pass to see the actual results of the decision. You cannot try it for two weeks, then evaluate the result and go back to smoking."

With members asking for a change, the vote to eliminate smoking at Post 8757 in Mountville was unanimous. Commander Robert Froelich reports that most people coming into the canteen after the switch approve of the improved air quality.

"We had business as usual the next day," commented Commander Froelich.

"People told us that they enjoyed the improved air quality and overall cleanliness of our facility. We have no problem recruiting social or Post members with the no-smoking policy.

I believe most posts would see similar results, but they have to let some time pass to see the actual results of the decision. You cannot try it for two weeks, then go back to smoking."

- Post 1446 QM Terry Stokes

"We had some members staying in our canteen and some brought their families in to eat. We are doing very well because we now have a cleaner and more comfortable place to hang out.

"We lost only one member, and gained some. Most other establishments in our area are non-smoking, so why not our VFW?"

At Ephrata Post 3376, the no-smoking atmosphere draws crowds large enough to make finding a table difficult.

"Our VFW and social members complained about smoke in the canteen. Members felt that it was time to go smoke free to improve the overall function and appeal of our canteen," Post 3376 Quartermaster Amy MacKenzie reported. "We had a lot of discussion, but it was a clear majority that voted to be smoke free."

When the Post previously allowed smoking, leadership realized that having smoke in the canteen kept more patrons from eating there. Casual polling from regular and social members showed that the majority was in favor of eliminating the use of tobacco in the Post.

Quartermaster MacKenzie stressed that any post moving away from smoking may have a transition period, but she emphasized that the benefits of changing their tobacco policy greatly outweighs any perceived negative impact. Post financial records show a marked increase in food business after smoking was extinguished.

"We have regained several members

who left when we allowed smoking. Some hold dual membership in clubs that allow smoking, and they enjoy our cleaner air. They don't mind smoking outside in our nicely appointed smoking area. And, we've had members transfer to our club from canteens that allow smoking. They enjoy the overall cleanliness of the building. We are no longer a dark, smoke-filled building.

"Our overall membership has grown and you see entire families come in for dinner, without them going home smelling like an ashtray. And, we can now rent the banquet hall easier and be open to the public without smoking issues."

When the State enacted the Clean Indoor Air Act in 2008, East Berlin VFW Post 8896 leadership decided the time was right to switch to being a no-smoking facility despite the exemption option.

"The vote was not close. We wanted to get away from the smoke smell and the yellowish cast on everything," Post Commander Gary Kopp stated. "Some members said they would not return, but they were back about a week later. It only took about a week to have business as usual.

"Our business has picked up. Our patrons are thrilled because they can bring their children in without exposing them to smoke," Kopp continued. "We have gained quite a few members; many applicants ask if we are smoke free. The younger people are quite interested because we offer a family-friendly environment."

Information from Lansdale VFW Post 32 shows that while several regular members opposed going smoke free, the vote to change received strong support. Reasons cited by Post 32 included:

- many of the members' spouses and older members did not visit the canteen due to the smoke;
- Some members had quit smoking;
- the cost of cleaning, repainting; replacing smoke filters and maintenance was too high; and
- members with health problems would be able to come into the canteen without suffering.

With four other area clubs still allowing smoking, canteen business has dropped so far. Even though Post 32 is bringing in more income than the expenses incurred, earnings are below last year's levels.

However, Post 32's commitment to providing a more healthy canteen experience remains true to why it first made the decision to stop smoking there.

"Our Post is not going back to allowing smoking," states the Post's response to a questionnaire for this story. "We bit the bullet and will weather the storm even though we are paying a price. Legislators need to require that all clubs and bars are smoke free. Then, our VFW will get our customers back because they love the VFW more than other clubs. Even smokers say they enjoy the cleaner air. New social

members have joined, and spouses of regular members come in when they couldn't before. People are happier."

Other Pennsylvania VFW posts offering a smoke-free atmosphere are Harrisburg Post 148, Dillsburg Post 6771, Mount Joy Post 5752 and Millersville Post 7294. (Contact HQ to add your post to our list.)

Why this issue is a VFW priority

The smoking issue—and the impact of second-hand smoke on the health of those who do not smoke—is a critical one as membership in many Pennsylvania VFW posts continues to drop significantly.

Over the past decade, the Pennsylvania Department's membership dropped from 123,987 members in 2007 to slightly over 80,000 as the 2017 program year started. This concerning decline—due in part by the passing of older members, delinquent memberships and a delay of younger veterans joining the VFW—prompted National and Department HQs to urge VFW posts to better connect with younger veterans and their families.

While attending veteran and military events, membership recruiters report frequently hearing, "I don't smoke and I don't want my family to be in a place that allows smoking," as a main reason why many younger members do not join. While recruiters provide these eligible members with concrete reasons to support the VFW—such as legislative advocacy, veterans benefit assistance and opportunities to continue serving their nation—many younger veterans still consider the VFW as smoky canteens, regardless of the critical



Convention delegates listen to discussion before approving a resolution asking the Commonwealth to end the smoking exemption in all PLCB-licensed facilities.

support the organization provides for all combat and peacekeeping zone veterans.

Since they are busy pursuing higher education, seeking career opportunities and raising families, younger veterans use whatever spare time they have to enjoy "family time." Therefore, leadership believes that it is vital for VFW posts to provide an environment and activities conducive to welcoming entire families.

The Center for Disease Control confirms that smoking is the leading factor of all preventable deaths causing, more than 480,000 deaths per year in the nation—including more than 41,000 deaths from second-hand smoke.

Recognizing this irrefutable negative impact on health, fewer Americans smoke today. As reported by healthypeople.gov, less than one in five Americans smoke: 16.5% among adults aged 18–44 smoked at the time of its survey, while only 17.0% of adults aged 45–64 smoked.

These statistics raise an obvious question for groups like the VFW, which already has a limited number of eligible members who can join:

"Why cloud the issue of whether more veterans will join—and their families will feel welcome—by greeting them with a serious health hazard in their local post?"

Resolution Addresses Concerns About Smoking Impact on VFW

The resolution approved at the 2017 State Convention noted that since the Department's founding in 1914:

"The PA Veterans of Foreign Wars has stood for and supported all veterans health issues; and by any and all medical and governmental reports, smoking and second-hand smoke has been proven to be a known 'carcinogens';

"While PA VFW respects the rights of our veterans to smoke, we also must respect the rights of the veterans who choose not to smoke;

"PA VFW is always seeking new members to join our ranks by encouraging our post leadership to maintain a quality operation conducive to all family members of our membership;

"Today, a vast majority of eligible veterans are non-smokers and do not frequent smoking establishments;

"To prevent further erosion of our membership and entice new members to join, we must address the health factor for all members and families (children and spouses), of our Posts;

"Legislation to ban smoking in all the PLCB-licensed establishments clubs, bars and restaurants across our Commonwealth will provide an even playing field for all entities;

Therefore, be it resolved that the PA VFW Convention meeting in regular session supports legislation to ban all smoking in PLCB establishments in our State."

The VFW Auxiliary ... Unwavering Support for Uncommon Heroes



The Department President Says...

“We Will” Succeed with Teamwork at All Levels

By Kelley Lepak - kms4013@hotmail.com or (724)203-4494



Congratulations to National Council member Sandy Brenner, National Scholarship Program Ambassador Karen Hoover, Eastern States Membership Coach Donna K. Mills, Department

Line Officers, District Presidents and Auxiliary Presidents, on your election and or appointments for the 2017-2018 term of office.

It is an honor to have been elected at the 93rd Annual Convention held in Greentree, as your Department President for the 2017-2018 year.

I look forward to meeting as many VFW comrades, brothers and sisters of the Auxiliary as possible as I make my travels across the state. In addition, it will be an honor to visit the VA Hospitals and Veterans Homes to meet veterans who have fought so hard for our country.

With a new year comes new and exciting changes, which we must

embrace to succeed. “We Will” meet the new challenges head on as a team.

Please utilize the On-Line Academies that the National Organization provides on the National website. The Academies provide short training videos that have a wealth of information.

The VFW Auxiliary Department of Pennsylvania will continue having a Facebook page that each member can access by typing “VFW Auxiliary Department of Pennsylvania” in the search bar. The Facebook page will contain helpful information for this year. Please “like” and follow our page and send us information that you think should be shared.

My best wishes to State Commander Dwight Fuhrman and his line officers for a successful year, as we “CATCH A DREAM FOR OUR VETERANS.” “We will work hand in hand with our VFW comrades, by “LIGHTING THE WAY FOR OUR VETERANS” as we continue to reach for the stars to make this a banner year for our Department.

Come On Auxiliary, Let's Go Fishing for More Members

By Bonnie Drake, Membership & Leadership Chair - gotauxbonnie@yahoo.com



THANK YOU, Department President Kelley Lepak, for asking me to serve as your Membership and Leadership Chairperson for 2017-18. I am looking forward to an outstanding year!

The changes to our Program this year include the MALTA system, which allows you to pay your dues online, among other things. We have new deadlines and goals, so visit www.pavfwaux.org (State site) and www.vfwauxiliary.org (National).

Our first goal is 100% PLUS 1 in Membership by December 31. Remember, when we reach this goal, I will go BALD. President Kelley, get the clippers ready!

We will not stop there! Can we get to 107%? Please start by paying your dues, then “Let’s go fishing for membership” by signing up new members and getting

members to rejoin this great organization.

I know Pennsylvania loves a challenge and “WE WILL” do it!

During the Auxiliary Leadership and Program/OTI Conference on August 11-13, Department Treasurer Jodie Hollinger demonstrated the MALTA system. Please take time to learn about this resource and utilize it frequently.

Thank you to my Chairpersons Dale Lepore (Central Area), Wendi Henneman (Eastern Area) and Leonie Graham (Western Area), and all those who accepted positions in our Auxiliary. I appreciate your commitment to learn your duties, read the materials you receive and work to make our programs successful.

We will “CATCH THE DREAM FOR OUR VETERANS” (Dee Guillory, National President’s Theme), as we are “LIGHTING THE WAY FOR OUR VETERANS” (Pennsylvania President’s Theme)!

President



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Participate in Our Youth Scholarship Programs

By Joan Faddis, Auxiliary Scholarships Chairperson - Tee3cubed@aol.com



Here is an overview of the PA Department Auxiliary’s Scholarship programs with the submission deadlines:

The Continuing Education Scholarship - Awards scholarships

to current Auxiliary members, their spouse, son or daughter with financial need. Deadline for entry is Feb. 15, 2018.

The Voice of Democracy Audio/Essay Competition - “American History—Our Hope for the Future”: asks students in grades 9-12 to write and record a themed essay with a Oct. 31, 2017 deadline.

The Patriot’s Pen Essay Competition - “America’s Gift to My Generation”: asks students in grades 6-8 to write a themed essay by the Oct. 31 deadline.

The Young American Creative Patriotic Art Competition: A scholarship for students in grades 9-12 with the opportunity to express their idea of patriotism through art. Students submit their work, with a brief description of the patriotism being expressed in the artwork. Deadline for entry is March 31, 2018.

Please contact me for more information about how your Auxiliary can participate in these scholarship programs. The process is easy, so we hope every Auxiliary will hold local contests.

Focus on Mission Success

PERIODICALS



Freeland Post 5010 presented \$1,900 to the Freeland YMCA. The funds were raised during the VFW Pool Shootout and Luau Pig Roast. Shown are (from left, front row): YMCA Volunteer Anna Mae Gornal, volunteer Mary Lloyd, Clarence "Clemy" Sontag, employee Crystal Chamber, Rob Polashenski and volunteer LeeAnn Baskin; (back row) Director Joe Flanagan, employee Mary Grace Dacunha, Bob Polashenski, Quartermaster Ray Clymer, Jr., Commander George Merenich, Home Association Vice Commander George Bogansky and employee Kelly Perkosky. (Photo Courtesy of Mary Pagano Photography)



Clark Summit Post 7069 presented past Post Commander Stuart J. Bailey with a name plate for placement on the Post's Past Commanders Honor Board. Bailey served as commander from 2010-2016. Pictured, from left: Commander Donald A. Jones, Bailey and Quartermaster Michael G. McLane.



Former Department State Judge Advocate Bob DeSousa presided over a Crawford County Korean War recognition event with Congressman Mike Kelly at Meadville Post 2006. Acting on behalf of U.S. Senator Pat Toomey, DeSousa awarded each Korean War Vet the Korean Ambassador of Peace Medal, which was secured by Senator Toomey.



West Mifflin Post 914 presented awards to outstanding cadets from the West Mifflin Area Senior High School Air Force JROTC program. Pictured are Commander Jake Bradich, Quartermaster Gary Ruston, Cadet Tech. Sgt. Joao Martinez-Lopes, Cadet Senior Airman Erin Beech, Cadet Senior Airman Brittany Velez and Cadet Tech. Sgt. Joshua Gurtner. (Photo by Michael P. Mauer)



Greensburg VFW Post 33 Chaplain Robert Stricklin endures the rain, wind and cold to raise money for veterans welfare on Buddy Poppy Day in May. Poppy donations should be used to support members experiencing hardship.



McMurray Post 764 Surgeon Larry Wisniewski presents \$10,000 to Dean Gartland, President/CEO of Washington City Mission. The donation is one of three \$10,000 installments Post 764 will give to the City Mission to help the facility build a multi-million dollar Veterans' Center.



Mercer Post 6345 partnered with Tractor Supply Store #525 in Hermitage during Memorial Day weekend to honor veterans who gave their lives for freedom. The Post raised \$337 in Poppy donations, signed up a new member, gave out two \$50 TS gift cards, served 200 hot dogs and handed out 275 water bottles. Pictured are Trustee Lou Dixon, Trustee Donald Styers, Quartermaster/Adjutant Al Chambers and Store Manager Bart.