



# Pennsylvania VFWnews



Vol. 47, No. 4

SSN 0745 4031

May/June 2016

Scan this to visit [www.vfwpahq.org](http://www.vfwpahq.org) and use our web resources to stay engaged and informed.

**YOUR VFW: NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS!**

## Protecting Veterans' Interests on Capitol Hill in D.C.

While the VFW's legislative activities in the nation's capital involve attending committee meetings, testifying and tracking key veterans' issues throughout the year, the organization's presence in Washington was especially impactful in March, reinforced by participants in the VFW National Legislative Conference.

Department leaders from Pennsylvania joined their comrades from across the nation to support VFW Commander-in-Chief John A. Biedrzycki, Jr., as he outlined critical challenges facing veterans during a joint hearing of the U.S. House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. Department leaders also visited their federal lawmakers to garner commitments that legislators would cast favorable votes when VFW-backed legislation was acted on including measures to strengthen the VA health care system.

"Congress must take a comprehensive look at the Veterans Health Administration to fix what is broken, and we will work with you to identify problems and make those needed changes," said Biedrzycki. "But let me be clear, the VFW is absolutely opposed to the privatization of VA health care! It cannot be replaced! We will fight efforts to do so!"

Biedrzycki went on to note that while the VA's outreach efforts surrounding the Choice Program have improved, the delay of medical documentation transfers and authorization for follow-up care still leave much room for improvement in scheduling community care appointments.

"Congress must provide the VA with the necessary resources that were requested. Congress must also act on VA's proposal to consolidate its community care programs. This is critical to the overall health care delivery transformation."

**Protecting Veterans ... see page 5**



VFW National HQs Photo



Photo by Jim Ritchie

PA VFW leadership and Post officials joined National Commander-in-Chief John A. Biedrzycki in sending a clear message to Congress: Veterans and our military deserve the best possible support, benefits and programs.

## PA VFW's Family-Friendly Convention Coming June 15-18 Split Rock Resort - Lake Harmony

Convention events begin Wednesday evening, June 15, with the Annual Memorial Service and close Saturday evening, June 18, with a reception for incoming State Commander Thomas Brown and Department Auxiliary President Donna Mills.

Daily information sessions will be held Thursday and Friday mornings. Department elections will be held Saturday morning during the Business Session. The first 2015-16 Council of Administration meeting will be held immediately after the installment of officers and the Program of Instruction.

The Patriotic Rally—featuring a pig roast and fireworks—will be held Friday evening.

**FORMS WERE SENT TO POSTS AND ARE ON [WWW.VFWPAHQ.ORG](http://WWW.VFWPAHQ.ORG) UNDER "EVENTS." PAY ATTENTION TO THE VARIOUS DEADLINES. A TENTATIVE AGENDA IS PROVIDED ON THE SITE.**

**THE HOTEL MAY BE TAKING NAMES TO BE ON A WAITING LIST. YOU CAN ALSO SEARCH ONLINE FOR HOTELS NEAR LAKE HARMONY INCLUDING SEVERAL WELL-KNOWN NATIONAL CHAIN HOTELS.**



## VFW's Strong Support of Our Troops Marches On



Titusville Post 5958 continues its tradition of supporting the ROTC program at Edinboro University. Commander William McCrillis presented a \$3,000 donation to the unit to purchase new uniforms for cadets becoming second lieutenants.



State HQs continues to support deployed PA Guardians including members of Detachment 1, C. Co., 2-104th Aviation. Currently deployed to Camp Taji for Operation Inherent Resolve, crew members flew this flag from State HQs on MEDEVAC missions. Those shown here include VFW members SSG Matthew Hessler (left, Post 155), CW2 Jason Murtha (second from right, Post 315) and 1LT Matthew Slatzer (right, Post 470).



PAARNG soldiers enjoy the annual Support the Troops Holiday Party hosted by Huntingdon Post 1754. All posts are encouraged to create relationships with their closest military unit as part of fulfilling the VFW's mission of serving others.





## From the State Commander

### Any Job Well Done Requires a Strong Finish

Glenn R. Umberger, Jr. - glenn.umberger@gmail.com



At this time of year we can easily be overcome with a variety of conflicting emotions. Joy and happiness with the arrival of Spring and the blossoming of flowers and trees. And with Memorial Day coming, we experience sorrow and sadness as we reflect on those veterans who are no longer with us.

This year I have an additional, personal reason for experiencing mixed emotions, as the honor you have bestowed upon me, as your State Commander, is soon coming to an end. The trust and confidence you have placed in me has inspired and energized me during this time. The comradery and hospitality you have shown me and our Auxiliary President Karen Hoover has been nothing but exemplary.

We started the year with "A Call to Service," my Commander's Project that focuses on community service. Throughout my travels I have been continuously amazed by the efforts made to support our veterans and communities. Your continued dedication truly shows that "No One Does More for Veterans" than the Veterans of Foreign Wars.



During the VFW's National Legislative Conference in Washington, State Commander Glenn R. Umberger, Jr., and numerous other PA Department leaders greeted the Sergeant Major of the U.S. Army, Daniel Dailey, a native of Pennsylvania.

Working together, we have achieved so much this year, but we still have one task to complete . . . achieving 100% in membership. The Department of Pennsylvania Auxiliary, Military Order of the Cooties and the Cooties Auxiliary all have surpassed 100% in their membership for 2015-16! Now it's time for us to do our part and add to this historic year. We need 4,000 members between now and June

30th, which equates to 57 members per day. WE CAN DO THIS!!

The members are there, we just need to communicate with them and encourage them to pay their dues now. However, this is only going to get us a quarter of what we need. Nearly 1,000 members dues expire between now and June 30th. Over 6,100 members have left their membership expire within the last 24 months. We need to bring these veterans back to the organization! There are still membership contests that can be won, so let's "git-r-done".



State Commander Glenn R. Umberger, Jr., who serves as President of the PA War Veterans Council, provides testimony in the State Capitol. Commander Umberger outlined the Council's legislative priorities during a joint meeting of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees.

As we approach the State Convention, be sure to complete all of the requirements for the All-State and other recognition programs. I have seen the great things you have done, so please submit your achievements and be recognized for your hard work.

The State Convention will be at the Split Rock Resort in the Poconos. The resort features an indoor water park and plenty of family-friendly activities. Bring the family and enjoy the fireworks during the Patriotic Rally celebration on Friday evening.

I am so grateful for the opportunity you have provided me as your State Commander. The experiences and memories will always remain a cherished period in my life.

When the time comes and I move into the position of Past State Commander, I promise to remain available to those who need advice or assistance. I will continue to travel through our great Department and keep you posted through my Facebook page.

Thank you for your service and all that you do to make Team Pennsylvania successful. Let's finish the year strong and achieve 100% in membership.

## Department Membership Update: 95.45% of the 2014-15 Year-End total

Top five posts ranked by Membership Division

Div.	Post	Location	%	7	4907	WELLSBORO	119.80%
1	5958	TITUSVILLE	102.15%	7	914	WEST MIFFLIN	119.26%
1	8951	WEST YORK	97.37%	7	6824	ROME	118.44%
1	1599	CHAMBERSBURG	92.12%	7	8430	EAST MC KEESPORT	106.48%
1	1989	INDIANA	91.21%	7	8427	HERMINIE	105.74%
2	7505	MARS	112.33%	8	6648	FREEMPORT	105.97%
2	1810	BRENTWOOD	112.01%	8	3258	CHALFONT	102.63%
2	1446	RED LION	103.66%	8	7783	SAINT BENEDICT	102.43%
2	8896	EAST BERLIN	102.99%	8	5644	SNOW SHOE	102.35%
2	7293	EGYPT	101.73%	8	499	EVANS CITY	102.29%
3	7043	COALPORT	127.08%	9	5201	BELLWOOD	106.34%
3	4843	FORD CITY	104.70%	9	6613	LENNI	101.92%
3	6393	YARDLEY	103.09%	9	6347	MOUNT JEWETT	101.58%
3	8803	TIDIOUTE	101.94%	9	553	STRABANE	101.51%
3	9199	SHALER TWP.	101.88%	9	5069	ANDREAS	100.00%
4	5207	DALEVILLE	110.00%	10	6518	EXETER	127.50%
4	1620	MIDDLETOWN	108.81%	10	294	ALBRIGHTSVILLE	111.36%
4	1568	TOWANDA	107.72%	10	265	FARMINGTON	110.52%
4	4793	WAYNESBURG	107.60%	10	11282	LEESPORT	108.00%
4	3460	MEDIA	105.11%	10	7949	EDDYSTONE	107.89%
5	3945	PITTSBURGH	110.28%	On April 25th Dept. membership stood at 81,572 members or 95.45% of the 2014-15 year-end total. So far this year 1,819 new members and 640 reinstated members have been recruited.			
5	882	MARYSVILLE	109.79%				
5	212	BRADFORD	109.09%				
5	148	HARRISBURG	106.71%				
5	6345	MERCER	104.69%				
6	3575	QUARRYVILLE	105.92%	Posts should read the State Membership Program to learn about all membership contests and the criteria for "All-State" and "All-American."			
6	25	SCRANTON	104.91%				
6	655	MC CONNELLSBURG	103.22%				
6	1940	BROUGHTON	101.78%				
6	3390	ERIE	101.48%				
Quartermasters are encouraged to visit <a href="http://www.vfw.org">www.vfw.org</a> to use the Online Membership System and to ask their District Membership Chairman for their post delinquent member list.							

### Top 10 Performing Membership Districts as of April 25th Congratulations District Commanders for Leading the Way Forward!

#### FIRST PLACE



Mark Webster

- DISTRICT 14 - 99.70% - Cmdr. Mark Webster
- DISTRICT 29 - 97.43% - Cmdr. John Winters
- DISTRICT 28 - 97.26% - Cmdr. Joseph Benacci
- DISTRICT 15 - 96.38% - Cmdr. Elmer Everetts
- DISTRICT 8 - 96.27% - Cmdr. James McComb
- DISTRICT 21 - 96.23% - Cmdr. Terry Stokes
- DISTRICT 19 - 96.08% - Cmdr. Ricky Hicks
- DISTRICT 17 - 96.04% - Cmdr. Ralph March
- DISTRICT 18 - 95.96% - Cmdr. Williard D'Amico
- DISTRICT 10 - 95.75% - Cmdr. John Tomasovitch



Commander Glenn Umberger hosted Department leaders, chairpersons, Auxiliary officers and Post officials who led the way in membership recruiting on a trip to see the VFW National Legislative Office in Washington, the War Memorials in D.C. and Arlington National Cemetery.





# AT YOUR SERVICE: CONNECTING YOU WITH BENEFIT INFORMATION



This information is provided by the Department's Veterans Service Officer program. Call State HQs at (717) 234-7927 or visit [www.vfwpahq.org](http://www.vfwpahq.org) for the nearest VFW Service Office. The Department thanks the State for Act 66 Veterans Service Officer Outreach Grant funds.

## HEALTH BENEFITS COPAYS

While many veterans qualify for free healthcare services based on a VA compensable service-connected condition or other special eligibilities, most veterans are required to complete a financial assessment or means test at the time of enrollment to determine if they qualify for free health care services. Veterans whose income exceeds VA income limits as well as those who choose not to complete the financial assessment at the time of enrollment, must agree to pay required copays for health care services to become eligible for VA healthcare services.

### Outpatient Copays:

- Primary Care Services: \$15
- Specialty Care Services: \$50
- Prescriptions: 1
- 30-day or less supply for certain veterans: \$8
- 30-day or less supply for higher income veterans: \$9

### 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 VA's inpatient 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 a 365-day period: \$128.00
- Daily Charge: \$2/day

**Priority Group 8** and certain other veterans are responsible for 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
- Daily Charge: \$10/day

Veterans living in high cost areas may qualify for a reduced inpatient copay rate. For more info contact VA at 877-222-VETS.

Veterans can use the Health Benefits Explorer to see what copays may apply to their health 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)
- Domiciliary: \$5 per day

\*\*Co-payments for Long-Term Care services start on the 22nd day of care during any 12-month period—there is no co-payment requirement for the first 21 days. Actual co-payment charges will vary from veteran to veteran depending upon financial information submitted on VA Form 10-10EC.

**Veterans Not Required To Make Copays** - Some veterans qualify for free healthcare and/or prescriptions based on special eligibility factors including but not limited to:

- Former Prisoner of War status



Department Assistant State Service Officer Dave Bower (second from left) answers veterans benefit questions during the NRA Outdoor Show. PA VFW Service Officers attend many events in rural areas of the Commonwealth to give all veterans easier access to assistance.

## PA Temporary Veterans Assistance Program

**Purpose:** Provide temporary financial assistance to veterans and their beneficiaries who reside in Pennsylvania for the necessities of life (food, daily, shelter, fuel and clothing).

**Veterans' Eligibility Criteria:** A person who served in the Armed Forces of the United States; who was discharged under honorable conditions after a period of active duty, other than active duty for training, as evidenced by a DD Form 214 or other official documentation; died in service or was killed in action; or suffered a service-connected disability as certified by the United States Veterans' Administration.

**Need for Temporary Assistance Criteria:** Financial circumstances temporarily resulting in insufficient funds to pay for shelter and necessities of living for the veteran and family, when:

- A veteran is temporarily unable to provide the necessities of living and has a direct and immediate need for assistance. The assistance must be essential and not for the relief of an inconvenience, or the purchase of goods or services other than necessities of living, and,
- Caused by temporary loss of income, assets or support due to sickness, disability, unemployment, natural or man-made disaster or other cause beyond the control of, and not as a result of, misconduct by the applicant or,
- Caused by a temporary increase in costs or expenses beyond the control of, and not as a result of misconduct by, the applicant resulting in insufficient funds to pay for necessities of living.

If eligible, a veteran or their beneficiary can qualify for an amount not to exceed \$1,600 in a twelve-month period. Contact the County Veterans' Affairs Director in the county you reside to apply for this program.

This information covers only some of the eligibility requirements. For more information, email the PA Dept. of Military and Veterans Affairs, [Ra-vta@pa.gov](mailto:Ra-vta@pa.gov) or visit <http://www.dmva.pa.gov/veteransaffairs>.

**Prior Approval for Veteran Care** - The Non-VA Medical Care Program Office provides payment authorization for eligible veterans to obtain routine outpatient medical services, and certain inpatient services, through community providers. This authorization may be granted when it has been determined that direct VA services are either geographically inaccessible or VA facilities are not available to meet a veteran's needs.

All community services must be preapproved before a Veteran receives treatment.

- 50% or more compensable VA service-connected disabilities (0-40% compensable service-connected may take copay test to determine prescription copay status)
- Veterans deemed catastrophically disabled by VA Services Exempt from Inpatient and Outpatient Copays:
- Special registry examinations offered by VA to evaluate possible health risks associated with military service
- Counseling and care for military sexual trauma
- Compensation and Pension examinations
- Care that is part of a VA research project
- Care related to a VA-rated service-connected disability
- Readjustment counseling and related mental health services
- Care for cancer of head or neck caused by nose or throat radium treatments received while 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 November 11, 1998
- Laboratory and electrocardiograms
- Hospice care

**Non-VA medical care** is care provided to eligible veterans outside of the VA when VA facilities are not feasibly available. All VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) can use this program when needed. The use of non-VA medical care is governed by federal laws containing eligibility criteria and other policies specifying when and why it can be used. A preapproval for treatment in the community is required for non-VA medical care—unless the medical event is an emergency. Emergency events may be reimbursed on behalf of the veteran in certain cases.

**Emergency Care Services** - There may be a time when a veteran requires emergency care. When it is not possible to go to a VAMC, a veteran may have to seek treatment at the nearest hospital with an emergency room. The VA is authorized under Title 38 U.S. Code to make payment or reimbursement to a claimant for emergency treatment provided to veterans meeting specific eligibility criteria.

## Need Help with a Claim? Your VFW State Service Officers are Ready to Assist

Philadelphia Region 215-381-3123; Wilkes-Barre/Scranton/Northeastern PA 570-821-2535/2536; Harrisburg/Lancaster/York/Chambersburg/Hanover Region 717-234-7927; Altoona/Johnstown Region 814-943-8164; Pittsburgh/Southwestern PA 412-395-6259/6260; Butler Region 724-287-4781, ext. 4579; Erie Office/Northwest PA 814-835-8494; Northcentral PA/Lock Haven Region 570-560-1382.







## WATCHING YOUR BACK: MEMBERSHIP PROTECTS YOUR INTERESTS



### The VFW's Legislative Firepower Protects Veterans' Futures



*As strongly stated by VFW National Commander-in-Chief John A. Biedrzycki, Jr., during a joint hearing of the U.S. Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees, the VFW's 2016 Legislative Priority list includes these critical programs and services:*

- End budget sequestration;
- Adjust budget caps to reflect the growing demand on DOD and VA services;
- Provide sufficient funding for all VA budget accounts;
- Pass meaningful accountability legislation;
- Develop standardized staffing models and hiring practices throughout VA;
- Performance measures capturing VA staff quality of work not just quantity;
- Expand timely access to direct VA health care through appropriate staffing models for each health care specialty, patient density thresholds for each VA medical facility, and a modular capital infrastructure that enables VA to adjust to changes in the veteran population;
- Reform and improve VA's Care in the Community process to ensure veterans have the choice to receive timely and seamless access to high-quality care in their communities when VA health care is not readily available. However, VA must remain the guarantor and coordinator of health care for all enrolled veterans;
- Consolidate all current non-VA care models into a single model;
- Modernize VA's scheduling system to ensure veteran centric, seamless scheduling, and not be susceptible to data manipulation;
- Expand the current caregiver benefits to those who care for severely injured, ill, and wounded veterans of all eras;
- Strengthen VA and DOD mental health programs to ensure service members and veterans who suffer from mental health conditions have access to robust mental health care services;
- Expand women's health care services to all VA medical centers to ensure the growing number of women veterans have

access to gender-specific services;

- Authorize the VA to receive reimbursement for non-service connected care provided to Medicare beneficiaries;
- Ensure veterans who were exposed to toxic substances receive care and benefits for all associated health conditions;
- Increase funding for VA research on the effects of Traumatic Brain Injury, how combat related injuries affect men and women veterans, and whether descendants of veterans who were exposed to toxic substances suffer from adverse health conditions associated with such exposures;
- Fully fund the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) so that they can sustain the necessary workforce and IT systems to ensure claims are completed in an accurate and timely manner;
- Hold the VBA accountable for the backlog of all claims and appeals, not just the compensation and pension claims that they define as their "workload";
- Ensure that VA exercise its authority to accept private medical evidence when processing disability compensation claims;
- Provide veterans the option to receive more timely appeal decisions by instituting the Fully Developed Appeals initiative;
- Demand that VA reverse its current policy that prevents veterans from submitting informal claims for benefits;
- Insist that VA improve its notification letter so veterans can understand the evidence used in making rating decisions;
- Conduct discharge reviews for veterans who suffer from PTSD/TBI and who were discharged under Other Than Honorable conditions;
- Congress must properly fund homeless veterans programs to ensure VA can end veteran homelessness;
- Improve vocational rehabilitation and employment by removing the 12-year delimiting period and tracking veterans' employment placement for at least 12 months post job placement;
- Ensure the Transition Assistance Program curricula meets the needs of service



**Department and post leaders visited many of the state's federal lawmakers during the VFW National Legislative Conference including Congressman Mike Doyle (left photo). Above, State Commander Glenn Umberger presents Congressman Ryan Costello with one of his coins.**

- members and all veterans at all phases of the transition process;
- Protect the integrity and sustainability of veterans' education benefits;
- Invest in developing small business opportunities for veterans;
- Ensure service members receive civilian credentials/academic credit for training received in the service;
- Insist that the U.S. government meets veteran hiring and contracting obligations;
- Fully support U.S. troops and their mission to fight the war on terrorism, as well as to protect our nation's citizens and interests around the world;
- Halt the development and/or proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;
- Fully fund and deploy a U.S. missile defense system;
- Secure America's borders;
- Ensure DOD maintains a quality and comprehensive benefits and retirement package that is the backbone to a quality all-volunteer force;
- Preserve the integrity of TRICARE to ensure service members and their families have timely access to high-quality health care;
- Protect service members' and their family members' on-base quality of life programs;
- Pass full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation;
- Eliminate the SBP/DIC offset for surviving military retiree spouses;
- Achieve the fullest possible accounting of U.S. military personnel missing from all wars;
- Ensure Congress fully funds the POW/MIA Accounting mission; and
- Insist the U.S. government keeps POW/MIA recovery a national priority.

### VFW Legislative Victories

*While its impressive legislative victories for veterans started in 1917, looking back at the VFW's achievements since 1980 shows the ongoing effectiveness and life enhancing impact of VFW advocacy:*

**"No One Does More for Veterans" than the Veterans of Foreign Wars**

- 1980 - VFW calls for Agent Orange study, Veterans Rehabilitation & Education Amendments
- 1981 - POW Benefits Act, Veterans Health Care, Training & Small Business Loan Act
- 1982 - Veterans Employment and Training Service, Vietnam Veterans Memorial dedicated
- 1983 - Emergency Veterans Job-Training Act
- 1984 - Montgomery GI Bill, Veterans Dioxin & Radiation Exposure Compensation Standards Act (P.L. 98-542): Agent Orange & Atomic Exposure
- 1987 - New GI Bill Continuation Act
- 1988 - The Radiation-Exposed Veterans Compensation Act, Department of Veterans Affairs Act, Veterans Judicial Review Act, Veterans Benefits & Improvement Act
- 1989 - VA becomes a Cabinet department, Court of Veterans Appeals
- 1990 - Agent Orange service-connection
- 1991 - Agent Orange Act (P.L. 102-4), Persian Gulf War Veterans Assistance Act and Veterans Benefits Improvement Act
- 1992 - Veterans Health Care Act
- 1996 - Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform
- 1999 - Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act
- 2003 - Concurrent receipt for military retirees rated 50% disabled or more (P.L. 108-136)
- 2004 - Full concurrent receipt for military retirees rated 100% disabled (P.L. 108-375)
- 2005 - Traumatic Injury Insurance supplement
- 2006 - Protesters banned from military funerals
- 2007 - VFW calls for VA/military healthcare review after Walter Reed outpatient debacle
- 2008 - Record VA discretionary budget, GI Bill for the 21st Century signed into law
- 2009 - Advanced Appropriations for VA
- 2010 - Family Caregiver Legislation signed: Ensured all VA/DOD health care programs recognized as meeting minimum coverage standards under national health care law
- 2011 - Vow to Hire Heroes Act and VFW stopped TRICARE premiums from increasing annually, Restoring GI Bill Fairness
- 2012 - Honoring Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act, Extended USERRA protections to veterans working for TSA
- 2013 - Reinstated Tuition Assistance Programs; Stolen Valor Act Passed; Stopped Creation of Distinguished Warfare Medal (Drone Medal)
- 2014 - The Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014; In-State Tuition for Post 9/11 GI Bill eligible veterans; Veterans Funding First Act; Advance appropriations for VA Benefits; Advance Appropriations for VA mandatory accounts becomes law
- 2015 - Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act



**Protecting veterans ... from page 1**

The VFW national commander pledged the organization's support for VA Secretary Bob McDonald's MyVA transformation, and strongly urged Congress to work with the VA to ensure the programs associated with this initiative succeed.

He also took the opportunity to convey some important findings derived from a recent survey conducted by the VFW to gauge how well the VA is serving women veterans. The survey found that the VA has made progress in addressing the unique needs of women, but improvement is still needed in the areas of health care, outreach and homelessness.

Results indicated that women prefer to receive care from female providers, and are more likely to be satisfied with their overall VA experience when receiving care from a female provider, yet only 40 percent of women were given the opportunity to choose the gender of their primary care provider.

"The VA must make every effort to hire more women health care professionals and expand women-specific programs to ensure all women veterans have access to women-specific care," said Biedrzycki.

He went on to note the VFW's support for a variety of topics to include the inclusion of Blue Water Navy ships for the purposes of Agent Orange presumption, expanding eligibility for Gulf War Registry health exams to Afghanistan war veterans, and the Fort McClellan Health Registry Act.

To view Commander Biedrzycki's full testimony video, visit [www.youtube.com/user/VFWVids](http://www.youtube.com/user/VFWVids).

**Community Service Activities Show Post Dedication to VFW Mission**

VFW posts of all sizes—from the largest in membership to smaller posts which operate without a canteen—perform an impressive amount of community service each year. These posts are known by veterans and their local community as "service driven" because of the assistance they provide for senior citizens, youth, deployed troops, public safety, food pantries, libraries, community projects, disaster relief and much more.

This activity shapes public perception of these posts as a positive force, which increases the likelihood that eligible veterans will join.

Community Service Activity Reports sent in by posts across the state show that serving veterans, our military and communities remains a top priority for All-American Middletown Post 1620, Chalfont Post 3258, Folsom Post 928 and Greensburg Post 33.

Posts are encouraged to submit entries in the Department's Annual Record Book Contest. These books serve as effective public relations tools that show veterans and the community how posts benefit people from all walks of life.

State Community Service Chairman Thomas Hanzes reports that during the first 11 months of the 2015-16 year, Pennsylvania VFW post contributed 654,406 hours of volunteerism

**Community Service ... page 10**



**Greensburg Post 33's many community service projects included supporting a fishing outing held by "Healing Waters Fly Fishing." The event gave 30 hospitalized veterans a chance to enjoy the outdoors.**



**Middletown Post 1620 participates in numerous community and veteran-related events including a Veterans Day program at the Harrisburg campus of Penn State, a homeless veteran Stand Down in Harrisburg, a community blood drive and sponsoring sports teams.**

**District Meeting Schedule**

**MAY 2016**

Dist.	Place	Date	Time
1	Crescenz VAMC – Philadelphia	May 11	7:30 P.M.
8	VFW Post #175 – Doylestown	May 15	1:30 P.M.
9	VFW Post #7294 – Millersville	May 15	1:30 P.M.
10	VFW Post #4712 – Simpson	May 15	2:00 P.M.
11	VFW Post #821 – Berwick	May 15	2:30 P.M.
12	VFW Post #1665 – Milton	May 15	2:30 P.M.
13	VFW Post #6558 – Womelsdorf	May 15	2:00 P.M.
14	VFW Post #8488 – Lenox	May 15	2:00 P.M.
15	VFW Post #6611 – Galetton	May 22	2:00 P.M.
16	VFW Post #7155 – Trappe	May 18	7:30 P.M.
17	VFW Post #5754 – Mount Union	May 15	2:00 P.M.
18	VFW Post #23 – Lebanon	May 15	2:00 P.M.
19	VFW Post #212 – Bradford	May 15	2:30 P.M.
20	VFW Post #7215 – Walnutport	May 14	2:00 P.M.
21	VFW Post #1446 – Red Lion	May 15	2:00 P.M.
22	VFW Post #8724 – Duncansville	May 15	2:30 P.M.
23	VFW Post #554 – Somerset	May 15	2:00 P.M.
24	VFW Post #8308 – Lawrence	May 22	2:00 P.M.
25	VFW Post #7376 – Saxonburg	May 15	2:00 P.M.
26	VFW Post #7605 – Twin Rocks	May 15	2:30 P.M.
27	VFW Post #92 – Lower Burrell	May 1	2:30 P.M.
28	VFW Post #470 – Erie	May 1	2:00 P.M.
29	VFW Post #7714 – Oakdale	May 15	2:00 P.M.

**SPECIAL NOTE: POSTS MUST BE REPRESENTED AT DISTRICT MEETINGS. POST COMMANDERS WHO CANNOT ATTEND DISTRICT MEETINGS MUST APPOINT A POST REPRESENTATIVE TO ATTEND.**

**OTI Sessions Prepare Officers for Post Leadership**

The Department has scheduled free summer training events to help post officers understand and fulfill their duties. These sessions are of great importance to both new and experienced post officers. Even if you have attended one of these sessions in the past you will benefit from the updates and new discussion opportunities that will enhance your ability to serve as a post officer.

Reserve the day that works out best for you. Each post is encouraged to send several officers to create a shared vision and teamwork. State HQs will mail details to post commanders. Dress is casual with VFW Cap. All sessions begin at 9 a.m.

- Central Area - August 7 at Selinsgrove Post 6631
- Southwestern Area - August 13 at Pittsburgh (Brentwood) Post 1810
- Northwestern Area - August 14 at Titusville Post 5958
- Northeastern Area - August 27 Clarks Summit Post 7069
- Southeastern Area - August 28 Sellersville Post 245

Incoming State Commander Thomas Brown encourages all posts to make plans now to participate in all VFW programs. Attending an OTI session will give posts a chance to ask questions about these programs.

**QMs: Report Election Results & Deceased Members**

Post quartermasters are required to file election results using National HQ's website immediately after the election. Commanders are responsible for ensuring that his or her quartermaster performs this duty even if the same officers are re-elected. National HQs makes it easy for post quartermasters to accomplish this task electronically. Go to [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org), enter the Online Membership System (OMS) in the post QM Tools section, and click "Post Election Report" and file the report. Each officer's information will automatically populate when the leader's membership number is entered. A copy of the report will be automatically sent to State HQs. Posts can also register delegates for the National Convention via OMS.

Quartermasters: report deceased members to State HQs promptly. Timely reporting removes their addresses from VFW lists, which reduces mailing costs and respects surviving family members who no longer want to receive VFW mail.



Focus on Mission Success



Carmichaels Post 3491 and Auxiliary volunteered time to ring bells at Salvation Army collection sites. Shown are George Riess, who manages the Salvation Army's center, Sr. Vice Commander Calvin "Santa Claus" Cox and Chaplain Bob Martin.



Mechanicsburg Post 6704 invited hospitalized veterans from the Lebanon VA Medical Center for a full turkey dinner. The post also arranged to entertain the guests of honor by having Mechanicsburg Mayor Jack Ritter—known for his magic act—and DJ Kenny Hetzel present.



Mrs. Betty Bugay, left, is presented a Purple Heart medal by West Mifflin VFW Post 914 Commander Jake Bradich. On May 20, 1951, her husband, John E. Bugay, was wounded in combat in Korea. His original award was lost, and the Purple Heart was replaced by the VFW.



Laurel High Junior Sara Altieri receives a check from Post 6233 that will help send her to a summer leadership camp. Pictured with her are Post Commander Bill Westover and Post Surgeon Richard Altieri, Sara's grandfather. Congratulations to Post 6233 for helping to develop our nation's future leaders!



Bangor Post 739, its Commander Eugene Edinger and its Auxiliary had an enjoyable time celebrating the 70-year membership anniversary of World War II veteran Donald Jones. Don, thanks for your military service and VFW support! (Photos by Mike Ortoski/Blue Valley Times)



Greensburg Post 33 Commander David Cackowski (right) and VOD Chairman George Klekner (left) congratulate Justin Pellis, the *Voice of Democracy* winner for the post. Justin is a senior at Greensburg Salem High School. He was presented with a monetary gift from the post. (Photo taken by Paul Yeckel)



Chalfont Post 3258 members are shown with BSA Scouts and leaders of Troop 133 on Veterans Day. The post was invited to visit with the Scouts to share military service stories and answer questions. Everyone enjoyed an indepth discussion about patriotism, citizenship and the concept of giving back to the community through military service.



State Representative Steve Santarsiero (left) honored VFW Post 6393 recently for its outstanding service to the military, veterans and the community. Shown with Rep. Santarsiero on the PA House of Representatives floor are Kathleen and Russ Davidson (Post Jr. Vice Commander), and House Speaker Mike Turzai. Congratulations to Post 6393 for this important recognition!



Focus on Mission Success



Morningside Post 3945 held its Holiday Visit for Hospitalized Veterans during which members handed out Christmas gifts to 54 hospitalized veterans at H.J. Heinz Division of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. The VFW volunteers visited with veterans to spread good wishes and holiday cheer. Each hospitalized veteran received a gift bag loaded with clothes, toiletries and games.



Female veterans take a break from activities at the Department's Women Veterans Retreat in the Poconos. Thanks to a strong number of donations the ladies enjoyed an all-expense-paid weekend complete with fun, information and recreational activities.



Following its Post Veterans Day Program presented at New Britain Township, Chalfont Post 3258 members formed up for a picture in front of the Veterans Monument. Active Duty Army Recruiter Sgt. Tim Sutherland (center), who came to the event out of personal interest, became the newest post member.



Shippensburg Post 6168 receives a plaque from Police Chief Fred Scott and Mayor Bruce Hockersmith for their community support, which included a \$2,500 donation for DARE Program and \$17,500 for a security camera system on traffic lights.



King of Prussia Post 7878 Commander Donald Collins sent in this snapshot of his Post Christmas Party, which brought together veterans for sharing seasonal cheer, camaraderie and support.

DUE TO THE MANY PHOTOS RECEIVED SOME PICTURES ARE BEING HELD FOR THE NEXT ISSUE. VFW NEWS CANNOT REPRODUCE NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS. PLEASE ASK YOUR LOCAL PAPER FOR PERMISSION TO REPRINT A PHOTO AND EMAIL THE FILE TO DSANDMAN@VFWPAHQ.ORG. PHOTO PRINTS ARE ALSO ACCEPTED VIA EMAIL OR REGULAR MAIL.



Selinsgrove Post 6631's proudly made a \$1,000 donation to the Snyder County Collation for Kids, an organization that promotes youth development.





## We're Strongest When We Stand United

Thomas A. Brown, State Sr. Vice-Commander - paatom1@verizon.net



As a veterans organization, we should take our political neutrality seriously. But this year's presidential election—with its forays into national security issues that have included proposals for carpet-bombing Syrian cities or water boarding extremists—has each of us navigating a political minefield.

I know that as VFW members you are frequently asked to comment on remarks made by presidential candidates. Historically, military members have been discouraged from commenting on campaign politics, since the candidate they criticize may become their commander-in-chief, whose orders they would be required to follow.

It is with no question that the VFW should remain apolitical and stay out of the 2016 presidential campaign.

It's very important that we have the trust of the American people, and it's very important that trust be founded on us being apolitical. We should remember that this is an election year and we should not speak about debate issues.

I believe that we, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, have a tradition of standing apart. I very much value and respect that tradition, so I believe we should remain

neutral. With great respect, I ask that you refrain from answering questions on behalf of our organization to avoid any appearance of partisanship by the VFW. We should be loyal to the commander-in-chief no matter who is in the oval office.

We do not pledge to protect blue states or red states, Republicans or Democrats, but one Nation indivisible. Our lifeblood is the will and support of the American people—we must never forget that. Nor can we act in a way that would undermine their confidence in us or fray our relationship of trust.

Part of the deal we made when we joined was to willingly subordinate our individual interest to the greater good of protecting vital national interests.

So remember, at no time should any VFW member or Post official imply that they are speaking on behalf of the VFW. You are, of course, free to speak your own mind and to have your vote in the direction of our nation through the election process. You have earned it!

Our National VFW Legislative Office in Washington, and our VFW Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki, are constantly in contact with federal lawmakers and the Administration to communicate VFW priorities.

I encourage you to visit the website section maintained by our Legislative Office in Washington at [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org)

God Bless America!

## VFW Honors Persian Gulf War Veterans

*The VFW ensures they will never be forgotten*

Monday, April 11, marked the 25th anniversary of the official cease fire of the Persian Gulf War. The VFW used this anniversary to honor and acknowledge the service and sacrifice of the many Gulf War veterans, who selflessly sacrificed to free a nation from evil's tyrannical grasp.

After six weeks of intensive bombing against Iraq and its army, the massive ground war in Kuwait began—ultimately lasting only 100 hours. As the dust settled, an Iraqi army had been defeated, and thousands of its troops had surrendered or been taken as prisoners of war.

Each of the nearly 700,000 U.S. Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen and Coast Guardsmen who served in the Kuwait theater fought bravely—contributing to an exceptional example of U.S. military prowess. Although the war lasted mere days, victory came with a high price tag, ultimately leaving 467 wounded, 374 service members dead, and two servicemen who still remain missing in action.

An Iraqi missile struck a barracks housing more than 100 American troops, killing 27 and wounding 98, including members of Pennsylvania's 475th Quartermaster Group, an Army Reserve unit based in Farrell.

Eight Army and Air Guard units from Pennsylvania were mobilized for duty in

Southwest Asia during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

This year, even as memories of the swift victory fade, the VFW encourages every American to continue saluting the service and sacrifice of all Gulf War veterans. Remembering their dedication and determination to keep America safe ensures their sacrifices will never be forgotten.



On April 24, 2006, House Bill 1820 became law and was amended through Act 50 to extend the application period to August, 31 2018. This bill established the Persian Gulf Conflict Veterans Benefit Act and provides a bonus to, or on behalf of, eligible current and former members of the Armed Forces, Reserve components or the PA National Guard, who served overseas in that war.

For more information visit the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs website, <http://www.dmva.pa.gov>.

## General Orders #4

1. Installing officers are directed to see to it that Post Election Report forms have been completed and submitted to National Headquarters prior to installing Post Officers. If a Post Election Report form has not been forwarded to National Headquarters at the time of installation, the installing officer shall complete and forward such report at the time of the installation of Post Officers no later than June 1. Additionally, Section 413 of the National By-Laws requires that a properly completed District Election Report be submitted to National Headquarters prior to the convening of the Department Convention.

Post Election Reports must be submitted following Post election of officers in April and no later than June 1 to the National Headquarters. We encourage all Post Quartermasters to use the online Election Report process featured in the Online Membership System (OMS). Post Election Reports received electronically will be forwarded to the Department Headquarters.

2. Post, District, Department Commanders, Adjutants and Quartermasters are reminded of the requirements of sections 216, 416 and 516 of the Manual of Procedure with regard to proof of eligibility for all newly-elected and appointed officers. Elected and appointed officers shall not be installed or assume the duties of their office until proof of eligibility has been submitted and properly reviewed. Failure or refusal to submit proof of eligibility within sixty (60) days of election or appointment shall result in the office being declared vacant.

3. Department Adjutants will forward a complete roster of the newly elected and appointed Department Officers to include District Commanders to the Adjutant General immediately following their installation at the Department Convention.

4. Attention of Department Quartermasters is directed to Section 518 of the Manual of Procedure, "Duty of Department Quartermaster" paragraph (f) Dues Reserves, which states: "Maintain a dues reserve fund as prescribed in Section 717 of the National By-Laws and the Manual of Procedure."

5. Attention is further directed to Section 518 of the Manual of Procedure, "Duty of the Department Quartermaster" paragraph (k) Budget, which states: "Prepare a tentative balanced budget for the financial operations of the ensuing year." The budget once adopted by the Department Council of Administration shall be forwarded to the Adjutant General by November 1.

6. Attention is called to the provisions of Section 703 of the National By-Laws which require that each officer accountable for funds or property pursuant to any provision of these By-Laws shall be bonded with an indemnity company as surety in a sum at least equal to the amount of the liquid assets for which, so far as can be anticipated, he may be accountable. The bond premium shall be paid from the funds of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Department, District,

County Council or Post, as the case may be, to which each officer is accountable. The bonds of such accountable officers, in amount and as to surety, shall be approved by their respective units and held by their respective Commanders. The Commander of each unit shall be responsible for the proper and adequate bonding of all accountable officers in his unit.

7. Section 218 of the Manual of Procedure requires that the Post Commander shall see that the Post Trustees Reports of Audit are properly prepared and submitted each quarter.

8. Attention of incoming Post Officers is directed to Section 218 of the Manual of Procedure which outlines the duties of various Post Officers.

9. Attention is directed to the provision of Section 222 (d) of the National By-Laws, "Each Post will pay, in advance, a national convention registration fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25) which shall entitle the Post to a packet of convention information and materials and one identified registered delegate for the National Convention. Each additional delegate attending the national convention will pay a ten dollar (\$10) delegate fee." Post Quartermasters are encouraged to register their delegate on-line through the Online Membership System (OMS). Posts failing to comply with this provision will be considered delinquent and in arrears.

10. Attention of Department Commanders-elect is directed to Section 516, paragraph (b), of the National By-Laws which provides that the Department Commander shall appoint an Adjutant, Chief of Staff, Inspector and Service Officer and such other officers as may be required by Department By-Laws. The Department Commander shall appoint such other officers, committee chairmen and committees as may be necessary to carry out the responsibilities and functions of the Department and the directives of the Commander-in-Chief.

It is recommended that the appointment of the Public Relations officers be based upon the appointee's credentials as a media representative with special emphasis upon qualifications and continuity rather than political criteria. It is also recommended that consideration be given in the preparation and adoption of Department budgets and to the importance and necessity for providing adequate financial support for Department Public Relations activities.

11. The 97th Department of Pennsylvania VFW State Convention will be held June 15th through June 18th, 2016. The State Convention will be held at Split Rock Resort, 100 Moseywood Road, Lake Harmony, PA 18624. The phone number for Split Rock Resort is 1-888-802-2348.

Glenn R. Umberger, Jr., State Commander ATTEST: John B. Getz, Jr., State Adjutant/Quartermaster





Membership Moment

**Relationship Building is the Key to the VFW's Future; Let's Reach Out to Eligible Veterans**

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



Veterans organizations, churches, other fraternal groups (Elks, Moose, Lions) and volunteer fire companies face the same challenge: how to recruit enough members to keep operations running and carry the torch into the future.

So how can the VFW overcome this challenge? Relationship building is the answer. Most people want to support a cause they can feel good about. Most people want to make a difference, whether it is through behind-the-scenes volunteerism or leadership roles. Most people enjoy spending time with others who share a common bond.

National HQs has a great membership recruiting video on their website under "My VFW" (you will need an email address/password). Post commanders should show this during a post meeting. We have

colorful materials to attract veterans' attention. Tap into the experience of our Department National Certified Recruiters. These resources help you transition from initial discussions to explaining membership benefits.

Relationship building does require time and effort; yes, you need to leave the Post canteen or miss an occasional sports event to connect with eligible members. If you care about the VFW's future, like those who went before you, please take the steps needed to connect with people with whom you share a very important common bond—service in an overseas combat/peacekeeping zone. Who else will understand their story, their needs and the challenges they face?

Building and maintaining supportive relationships will also help keep your current members engaged so you won't have to chase them down next year.

Please participate in the following new contest and complete the original contests still with open deadlines:

Special Contest 2 -

Any post that gets 15 new or reinstated members from April 1 to May 31, 2016 will receive a \$400 stipend for a post delegate to attend the National Convention in July 2016. This may be used by any member in good standing of that post. The name of the post delegate will need to be submitted to Department HQs no later than June 8, 2016. *(Deadline for special National Convention housing rates is June 13 or until block of rooms sells out).*

*Thanks for helping the VFW to stay strong as the worlds largest organization of combat veterans!*



Chaplain's Corner

**Today's Planning for Tomorrow: A Template to Help Make a Difficult Process Easier**

Rev. Peter Hook, State Chaplain - peterhook@verizon.net or (267) 229-7722



My last article in the March/April 2016 issue generated a lot of positive response. I have had numerous calls from around the country requesting forms and further information as

while trying to make decisions quickly with little or no information to guide them.

Therefore, several years ago I developed a "Planning and Preferences Template" to help comrades begin to get their important papers in order and to make it easy for them to think through and list some of their preferences and desires.

While this is not something any of us want to think about and do, we can sure make things a lot easier for our family if we at least fill out the items listed here. Doing so will help your family and will ensure your wishes will be carried out.

Just complete this form (at right), cut it out and put it with your important papers. If you would like to do more, I have information and templates for each of the items listed on the Planning and Preferences Sheet (living will, will, etc.) on [www.vfwpahq.org](http://www.vfwpahq.org), under District/Post Tools and open the Chaplain's Guide.

*Blessings as you serve.*

veterans and their families sensed the need to begin to get their affairs in order.

One of the things I deal with on a regular basis as a post chaplain is helping families after the loss of a loved one. On more than one occasion, the immediate family had not been able to locate their loved one's DD 214. And, unfortunately, many times no preparation was made by the deceased.

This creates a big headache for the family because the immediate family is put under tremendous stress as they try to locate documents and important papers

**My Planning and Preferences Today for My Needs Tomorrow**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

Do I have my DD 214?                      Yes                      No  
 Location of my DD 214: \_\_\_\_\_

Do I have a Living Will?                      Yes                      No  
 Location of my Living Will: \_\_\_\_\_

Do I have a Will?                      Yes                      No  
 Location of my Will: \_\_\_\_\_

The Executor of my will is: \_\_\_\_\_

I would prefer:                      Burial                      Cremation  
 If cremation, I would like an Urn:    Yes                      No  
 If burial, my casket should be:    Wood                      Metal  
 I would prefer this type of service:    Funeral                      Memorial  
 Conducting services for me, I would prefer: \_\_\_\_\_

I want my service to be held at: \_\_\_\_\_

Visitation time preference:                      \_\_\_\_\_                      None

Do I want to be buried at a National Cemetery?    Yes                      No  
 I desire to be buried at: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

If private lot, my plot preference or # is: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_


**Make Memorial Day A Solemn Tribute**

*For those who gave their lives for freedom, and those who passed on after serving their nation, let Memorial Day be about giving thanks for their sacrifices and reflecting on how they made this world a better place to live. We salute them all and we support their families.*



**You may wish to enlarge this form before completing the questions**




**Facts and Figures**
**Preparation & Thoroughness Gets the Job Done**

 John Getz, State Adjutant/Quartermaster - [adjutant@vfwpahq.org](mailto:adjutant@vfwpahq.org)


Comrades, we are once again getting ready to have a great State Convention, this one at the Split Rock Resort in the Poconos. We will have plenty of business to go through.

One important part of participating in our convention is electing post delegates to our convention. You must understand that these delegates will be the only voting members during district meetings through the entire year until next July. These are the members who will be able to vote for your post.

Remember, if your post does not register delegates for our State Convention—and those delegates do not sign in to pick up their badge before Saturday's (June 18) business session—you will not be allowed to cast votes during our Department elections.

Section 222 of the Bylaws cover this rule, and it also covers our obligation for the National Delegates under Section 222 Subsection D.

All Trustees, please make sure your Trustee Reports of Audit are correct. I have been reviewing and then returning many reports for simple errors like

leaving "Funds" line #4, the Post Relief Fund, without a balance. Section 704 of the Bylaws covers why the Department will not accept any reports without this area filled in.

Also, line #5 Section 717 of the Bylaws and Manual of Procedure covers why we cannot accept audits without details on this required fund.

To recently elected leaders who are new to their position: please visit the National VFW website, [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org), and get a user password so you can utilize the officer training materials on that site including outstanding videos. Also spend some time on our Department website, [www.vfwpahq.org](http://www.vfwpahq.org), to learn about the many resources we have uploaded to assist you.

I also hope you will seriously consider attending one of our upcoming Officer Training Institutes. These sessions let you ask any questions you have about the position you hold. Bringing numerous people from your post will also help create a team-focused approach to running your post. See the OTI information on page 5 and watch for a mailing to arrive at your post.

Thank you for all your hard work. Please remember that the VFW exists to help all veterans and their families.


**It's Time to Reflect and Report**

Dwight R. Fuhrman, State Jr. Vice Commander &amp; VOD Chairman



Greetings to my fellow veterans! Are you ready for some warm weather? I am, especially after a Mid-Winter Conference blizzard not soon to be forgotten and then more snow in April!

It is time to record and reflect on our accountability for the 2015-2016 year. Did you do anything to make your post brighter and more welcoming?

Did you sign up some younger veterans who we need to keep our posts going into the future? We need to do a better job explaining why they should join—and how they will benefit from joining—today rather than waiting years down the road. If younger veterans tell you that they aren't interested or that they don't have time to hang out at the post, please explain that VFW membership has many more benefits than just providing a canteen to spend a few hours in.

Did you welcome home a Vietnam veteran during this 50th commemorative

year? It's not difficult to approach a Vietnam veteran to say, "Thank you for your service. Let me tell you what the VFW can do for you and has been doing for you." In addition, there are still WWII and Korean War vets that were never asked to join our ranks. Let's invite them all into our great organization!

Did you report all of your community activity projects? When you participate in VFW programs that benefit our veterans, our military and your community, you demonstrated that your post is successfully carrying out the VFW mission. State HQs will put your report form in your post file at HQs so when someone asks if your post is an active one we can point to your reported activities.

Is your post getting ready for the 2016-2017 year or are you saying "Well, we have always done it this way before (wrong answer)." I encourage you to step out of your box and do something different next year to make your post better and the VFW stronger.

I hope to see everyone—and their families—at the Department Convention in Split Rock in June.

**Community Service ... from page 5**

and \$6.67 million in donations and community support—a significant increase over last year, with only 80% of posts reporting.

As of press time, ten districts reported having 100% of their posts with community service activity recorded at State HQs: 7, 8, 10, 13, 16, 18, 21, 22, 28 and 29.

Nationally each year, the VFW and its Auxiliaries donate more than 11 million volunteer hours and \$50 million to community service projects.

Contacting the Department's program chairpersons will help posts identify proven strategies and resources for easily providing community support. Attending district meetings will also yield ideas to make building community relations easy.

Posts striving for "All-State" honors can receive a scoring credit by creating and submitting a record book. The books can be created as a scrapbook, Power Point slide show or DVD movie. The



Post 928's community service has attracted younger members including veterans like Johnny Walker (OIF/OEF), John Sheaffer (GWOT) and Joe Galliano (OIF/OEF).

entries are judged, with Department winners receiving special recognition during the State Convention.

Posts should appoint a community activity reporting coordinator who collects photos, newspaper clippings, thank-you notes and other items that can be used to create a record book.



Chalfont Post 3258 has a strong reputation as a service organization, in part, through its outstanding military appreciation efforts.

**VFW's Unmet Needs Grants Help Vets Deployed in Last Six Years**

As the nation's largest combat veterans organization, the VFW understands the challenges veterans, service members and military families can face and we believe that experiencing financial difficulties should not be one of them.

**Unmet Needs is there to help America's service members** who have been deployed in the last six years and have run into financial difficulties as a result of deployment or other military activity. For more info visit [www.vfw.org/UnmetNeeds](http://www.vfw.org/UnmetNeeds).



(ISSN 0745 4031) OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE DEPT. OF PENNSYLVANIA VFW - Act of March 1879

Dedicated to the comradeship of those who borne arms in defense of the USA, to the principle of informed and active patriotism, working to keep us strong and free.

Periodicals postage paid @ Harrisburg PA Post Office. Four issues printed annually dated August/September, November/December, March/April and May/June

Dept. of PA Veterans of Foreign Wars, 4002 Fenton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17109-5943  
State HQ - (717) 234-7927 - Fax: (717) 234-1955 - [www.vfwpahq.org](http://www.vfwpahq.org) - Facebook: "VFW Department PA"

Editors: State Commander Glenn R. Umberger, Jr. and State Adjutant/Quartermaster John B. Getz, Jr.  
Produced by Department Communications & Public Affairs Director David A. Sandman

\$0.85 cents of membership dues is for a subscription to *Pennsylvania VFW News*.

Postmaster: Send address change to PENNSYLVANIA VFW NEWS  
Circulation Dept., (VFW Magazine), 406 WEST 34TH ST., KANSAS CITY, MO 64111-7503



# The VFW Auxiliary ...

## Unwavering Support for Uncommon Heroes



*The Department President Says...*

### Your Enthusiasm and Dedication Changes Lives

Karen Hoover - khoover@pbi.org or (717) 503-0996



#### *"We Believe in America's Veterans"*

Wow, how time flies...it seems like we were just doing all the planning for the 2015-2016 year, then installation and

now it is almost at the end of my term as VFW Department Auxiliary President for Pennsylvania.

It has been a very rewarding experience to serve as the President for Pennsylvania, one I will cherish forever. I have thoroughly enjoyed serving with State Commander Glenn Umberger Jr. who has been very supportive of the Auxiliary and all of our members. He is very dedicated in promoting the mission of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and demonstrates excellent leadership skills.

In my travels I loved hearing about all the great things you are doing in your communities to make life better and futures brighter for veterans, military personnel and their families. The events being held and the work being done for our programs are both heartwarming and an inspiration to others.

As our membership increases we can

only become stronger and accomplish more for our veterans. Please continue to recruit new members in support of *"Our Veterans - Now and Forever."*

The future of our organization needs to include mentorship. To build on our legacy of being one of the best veterans' service organizations, we must engage our new members in our mission so we can retain their talents for future years. Invite them to get involved, be open to their ideas, don't let personalities and internal politics get in the way, and work hard to keep their interest so you will benefit from their participation.

I look forward to the few remaining district visits and meeting more of the members at the district, post and auxiliary level. We are all Sisters and Brothers in one mission—our Veterans. I am very appreciative of your many hospitalities and the great work you have all done this year.

I will see you all at the Department Convention in Lake Harmony. Split Rock Resort is a great place to bring the family and enjoy the many avenues of fun and relaxation during your free time.

God Bless All and I wish you success in all your endeavors. All things are possible if you Believe!



### Thank You for a Great Auxiliary Experience

By Sharon McCullough, Outgoing Secretary-Treasurer



*To all my Brothers and Sisters of the VFW Auxiliary and Comrades of the VFW:*

They say that time flies when you are having fun. WOW!!! It seems just like yesterday that I

started working for the Department VFW Auxiliary. I have served as Department Treasurer for five and a half years and the combined office of Secretary-Treasurer for 11½ years. I am on my 18th year in this office, and it has been a pleasure (most of the time) to work here. During my years I tried to apply the same diligence and responsibility as when I started in 1998.

However, I am retiring and moving on to bigger and better goals.

Though I understand this is a bit

earlier than anticipated, my decision to retire early was finalized after long and careful consideration of all factors.

I find that this retirement will be bittersweet, as I regret leaving many sisters, brothers, comrades and friends here, but I am excited to start a new chapter in my life with my husband Steven and my family. I feel this change will be beneficial to my long term goals and objectives. My last day of employment will be June 30th.

I am thankful for having such a great organization to contribute to. It has been a pleasurable, positive learning experience. I have gained much and have enjoyed working with all of you. I feel blessed beyond measure, and I wish nothing but success for the Department VFW and Auxiliary.

I trust we may once again cross paths in the future. *Loyally, Sharon*

### Spotlighting Our Auxiliary Successes

Pictured is some of the Dept. of PA VFW delegation that participated in the VFW National Legislative Conference in March. Numerous leaders of the Dept. Auxiliary—including President Karen Hoover and her line officers—were joined by former National Council member Bette Jean Biedrzycki, wife of VFW National Commander-in-Chief "Big John" Biedrzycki.



### Auxiliary Membership is 104.51% and Climbing!



In the first year of the Dept. of PA Auxiliary accepting male members, Auxiliary membership has rocketed to more than 104% of the 2014-15 year-end total. Several thousand men who previously could not join their post except as social members quickly chose to proudly support the fine tradition of the Auxiliary and to become involved in the many programs that support the mission of the VFW.

As of April 15, the Auxiliary stood at 104.51% with the following breakdown: 16,329 life members; 2,498 new members; 198 reinstated members; 13,410 annual members; 32,435 total paid including 2,574 male members.

Congratulations to President Hoover, her line officers and membership team for reaching this high level and for being one of the best performing membership Auxiliary Departments in the nation.



### It's the Right Time to Get Off the Highway

By Bea Laughman, Past Dept. President and Outgoing Clerk



*To All VFW Auxiliary Brothers and Sisters:*

I have heard that when the right time comes to retire, the person involved will certainly be aware of that fact. Well, the right time has come

for this person to finally give a fond farewell to the VFW Auxiliary.

I have been around, in one capacity or another, for the last several years. First as Department President in 1994/1995, then as Department Secretary from 1995 through 2004 and part of 2005. After that tenure, I left employment with the Department until 2007 when the young lady who replaced me became pregnant and chose to stay at home with the children. I then became employed again and have remained in the capacity of Department Clerk until now. I've been employed here 19 years—

just short of one year to earn a Gold Watch (or so I have been told).

Truthfully, with all of the changes that have come about during my employment, some were good, some not so good, but those are being worked on to make them better.

It is time for me to say *"So Long"* to everyone who I have met and/or worked with over the years. My last vacation to Florida really spoiled me since I did not take any work with me (as I have done the last several years). I enjoyed not getting up early and driving Interstate 81 to State HQs. It was a wonderful feeling and one that I am looking forward to as of June 30th.

Thank you to everyone who helped make my life enjoyable. To those who helped make my life not so good, I also thank you. I will cherish my friendships that I have made and look forward to seeing you all at some time in the near future. *Loyally, Bea.*



## FOCUS ON MISSION SUCCESS



Etters Post 537 recognized World War II veterans from three VFW posts at a dinner/reception in February. Post Commander Ron Reinecker began the program by welcoming the WW II veterans and introducing each one by name and branch of service. WW II veterans present were VFW members from Post 537, Mt. Wolf Post 2493 and one member from Borth Carolina Post 25034). The honored guests included: Red Andrews, US Army; Jay Beshore, US Navy; Mark Bitterman, US Army; Robert Bloss, US Army; Ben Crawford, US Army; Lloyd Elrod, US Navy; John Fetrow, US Army; Clair Good, US Army; and Ray Mansberger, US Navy. State Veterans Commission Chairman John Brenner, a Vietnam veteran and member of Post 2493, was the guest speaker. Post 537 gave each WW II veteran a 99.9% pure silver commemorative coin of their respective branch.



Hershey Post 3502 hosted residents and staff from the Lebanon VA Medical Center for a holiday celebration complete with a full turkey dinner, games, a visit from Santa and entertainment. The comrades enjoyed the event and look forward to coming back next year.



Mercer Elementary School students collected items for the Fisher House in Pittsburgh, which were delivered by Mercer Post 6345. Shown at the Fisher House are Quartermaster Al Chambers, Trustee Lou Dixon, Auxiliary member Denise Chambers holding Emma Hogan and FH Friends Trustee Jim Broder.



District 28 Chaplain Charlie Castellucio organized packages for veterans living at the Erie VA Medical Center including t-shirts of the veterans' military branch, sweatshirts, socks and sundry items. The district also donated DVD Players and DVDs for each floor. Pictured from left to right are Ron Craker, District 28 Sr. Vice Commander; Harold Smithers, District 28 VA Representative; Charlie Castellucio, District 28 Chaplain; Karen O'Neal, Erie VA Voluntary Services Officer; and Joe Benacci, District 28 Commander.



Williamsburg Post 6086 participated in a District 22 Flag Burning Ceremony with Boy Scout Troop 53 from Williamsburg. The Scouts learned how to respect the United States flag while it is flying and how to properly retire flags when they are no longer suitable for use.



At the Stroudsburg University Veterans Center, Tobyhanna Post 3448 proudly welcomed its newest—and some of its youngest—members. Pictured (at left) is veteran Brandon Johnson standing with Monroe County Commissioner Suzanne McCool and veteran Herbert Mack.

## PERIODICALS