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## VFW NEWS - Celebrating 50 Years of Keeping VFW Members Informed and Inspired

### Somerset Post 554 Student Representative Bests Field of 40,000

## Department Celebrates its First National VOD Champ

Most high school students only know about American history through what they read in textbooks or online. They might memorize just enough information to pass a course. But for Somerset home-school senior Christina A. Troll, her studies go well beyond required reading assignments to delve deep into how combat veterans have impacted the world and how their sacrifices have changed them.

By participating in Veterans of Foreign Wars' student essay contests, she has developed a passion for appreciating those who shaped history on a worldwide scale through military service.

Troll has mastered the ability to make history jump off the printed page and leap from a laptop screen to bring veterans' stories to life, as demonstrated by her winning both the Pennsylvania Department's *Voice of Democracy* and National VOD contests. In March, she placed ahead of 40,000 other student writers to become the first student from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to win the National VOD title.

Her first-place essay on the topic of "Why My

### PA Department Members Enjoy A White House Presidential Visit



When President Donald Trump attended the VFW's 2018 National Convention, Past State Commander Allen Q. Jones was invited on stage to meet the nation's commander in chief. During the brief encounter, World War II veteran Jones asked President Trump if he could visit the White House on his 95th birthday.

On April 11, Jones—a life member of Connellsville Post 21—visited the President in the Oval Office with three other WW II veterans. At 103, Chambersburg Post 1599 life member Paul Kriner was the oldest veteran there.

Jones and Kriner (front row, middle veterans) are shown enjoying their conversation with the President. Past Department President Nancy Jones is shown standing behind her husband. (Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images).



Somerset home-school senior Christina A. Troll delivers her winning National VOD essay.

*Vote Matters*" earned her \$35,000 in scholarships from National Headquarters and the Department, plus monetary awards from the post and district competitions. She also received a new laptop, courtesy of Dell.

Standing in front of other Department champions and VFW leaders, Troll flawlessly read her first-place essay during the Parade of Winners at the VFW Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.

"Winning the State and National VOD titles have been a very surreal and humbling experience for me," stated Troll, who was sponsored by Somerset Post 554 and its Auxiliary in Somerset, District 23.

"I have been involved with the VFW program for several years now through different patriotic contests. I have met so many incredible servicemen and women who have taught me what a true patriot is. I have been thrilled to be able to, in my own small way, give back to the veteran and civilian communities who have fostered me so much as a **National VOD Winner ... see page 11**

### Carlisle Post 477 Takes Home Award

## PA Teacher is Chosen as Top High School Educator by National VFW

Speak to any veteran who has received medals for outstanding service and they will most likely remark that they were just doing their duty to achieve the military's mission.

Though he has never served in the military, Carlisle High School teacher Kevin Wagner brings the same mission-driven mantra to teaching students about veterans who proudly answered their nation's call to war.

"As I believe any soldier would say and recite, I am only doing my duty and providing a service to my community and my country," said Wagner, who was recently selected as the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award recipient in the high school category. National Headquarters chose Wagner for the accolade because of his outstanding dedication to honoring the memory of America's veterans.

Carlisle VFW Post 477 and its Auxiliary in District 18 sponsored Wagner's nomination.

**National VFW Teacher Award ... see page 13**



VFW National H.S. Teacher of the Year Kevin Wagner and Post 477 Commander Rick Olson pause for a photo while celebrating the award.

## PA Department to Celebrate 100th State Convention in Erie

VFW leaders from across the state will gather at the Ambassador Conference Center Hotel in Erie, June 12-15, for the 2019 State Convention to celebrate VFW successes during the 2018-19 program year under the leadership of State Commander Thomas M. Hanzes.

This event will be the Department's 100th consecutive State Convention. A special 100th State Convention Anniversary coin will be available for purchase to remember the special occasion.

Robert Wallace, the National VFW's assistant adjutant general and executive director of the Washington Office, will represent National Headquarters.

Events begin Wednesday night with the Annual Memorial Service and end Saturday night with a reception for incoming State Commander Wayne Perry and Auxiliary President Sandra Wilder.

Daily information and award sessions are scheduled for Thursday and Friday. The Patriotic Rally will be held Friday evening. Department elections will occur Saturday.

The first 2019-20 Council of Administration meeting will be held Saturday afternoon and is open to all active VFW members.

## Happy 100th Anniversary, Post 118!



A lot of military history and VFW developments have occurred since 1919 when the Millvale Post 118 received its charter to operate as a Veterans of Foreign Wars unit. State Commander Thomas Hanzes, his Chief of Staff James Lewis and Post leadership gathered recently to celebrate the Post 118's 100th anniversary and discuss the past century. Commander Jim Miller proudly holds a 100th Anniversary Certificate from National Commander B.J. Lawrence. Commander Miller is shown with Post officers and members.

*From the State Commander***VFW Excellence Requires Constant Effort and Integrity**

Thomas M. Hanzes - thomashanzes@yahoo.com or (724) 815-9164



*“We (the VFW) are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act, but a habit. (Aristotle)”*

To My VFW Comrades: We must never allow complacency in

our organization to be what we repeatedly do! Instead, we must strive repeatedly for excellence in all our posts and our VFW programs, in how we help veterans and in how we impact our communities!

Excellence will require change at times, in the name of progress. Nothing is more detrimental to any organization than, *“We’ve always done it that way!”*

Excellence requires teamwork. Teamwork makes the dream work! To build a strong team, you must see someone else’s strength as a complement to your weakness, not as a threat.

***“As the year comes to a close, saying “thank you” is not enough to EVERYONE in this Department for all the dedication, hard work, success and excellence this year! ALL of you have played a part in our success and excellence—from the smallest to the largest posts—every district, every commander, every member! EVERYONE in our Department has much to be proud of as shown by our accomplishments.”***

Excellence and success is about consistency—the consistent and unending hard work that leads to greatness. It’s about loyalty and commitment. Our Department exudes excellence!

Your excellence in recruiting new members and reinstating members has boosted the Department’s membership to 99.57% at press time. I hope that we hit 100% before you read this.

As the year comes to a close, saying *“thank you”* is not enough to EVERYONE in this Department for all the dedication, hard work, success and excellence this

success and excellence—from the smallest to the largest posts—every district, every commander, every member! EVERYONE in our Department has much to be proud of as shown by our accomplishments!

It was an extreme honor to serve with Department President Charlotte Swogger Lopes and her staff and leadership. The Auxiliary contributes so much to make our Department great.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to:

- Staff at Headquarters in Harrisburg, the Auxiliary, the Service Officers—thank you all for all your help, guidance, and friendship! State Adjutant/Quartermaster John Getz, Public Affairs Director David Sandman and Front Office/Membership Guru Joyce Reece, there are no adequate words to thank you for how you have helped me, guided me and made me a better Commander. What a great team! I will always treasure your friendship.

- My friends and successors, Sr. Vice Commander Wayne Pery and Jr. Vice Commander Ron Peters, I wish the very best. You have my full support!

- All my district commanders, I am so honored to serve with you. You all “had my back” and have been an incredible inspiration. Your efforts will never be forgotten! Our Department has a long and cherished history because of leaders like you whose hard work and dedication have turned the corner to a successful future, and
- Everyone who welcomed me, Anne and our traveling team at your posts and districts. We are extremely grateful for your kindness, courtesies and such overwhelming hospitality.

This has been a tremendously rewarding year. I have fulfilled my duties to the best of my ability using “Serve-Mentor-Inspire” to direct my year. I hope I have fulfilled your expectations of me.

There are no limits to what our Department can accomplish. Because of ALL OF YOU, we are the world’s greatest veterans organization!

***NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS THAN THE VFW!***



State Commander Thomas Hanzes presents Commander Dave Hogg and other leaders of Volant Post 7465 with a 70th anniversary certificate. Auxiliary President Judy Dixon and District 28 leadership were also there to help the Post celebrate.

**Haymaker Family Committed to Serving Their Nation**

Story and photo by Cory Angell, PAARNG 28th Infantry Division

For the Haymaker family, the 28th Military Police Company in Johnstown is much more than a unit, it’s a family outside the family.

“Honestly, since I was a kid, I wanted to join up with the 28th,” said Spc. Josh Haymaker, 23, now serving with the company in Afghanistan. “I got to watch my dad excel at leading these great soldiers and I really wanted to be a part of that legacy. However, my skill set is more geared towards medicine rather than police work so I became the medic for the 28th.”

Sgt. Major Scott Haymaker, a VFW life member, served as a Johnstown police officer and drilled with the 28th MP Co. after his active duty tour as an MP in Germany from 1988-93.

“I wanted to be in law enforcement so I planned to go in the Army as an MP and come out to work in law enforcement,” said Haymaker, who continues to serve with the PA National Guard. “Being an officer in Johnstown, and the unit being part of the community, it was the perfect place to serve. My son and daughter grew up around the 28th MP Co. and joined that unit.”

“It was almost a given that if I was going to be an MP, I was going to be in my father’s old unit, following tradition,” said Cpl. Tiffany McMullen, the daughter of Haymaker. “Being around the company and the military when I was young did give me more respect and understanding of what soldiers do for us than other children.”

McMullen did not deploy with the unit to Afghanistan but remains in Johnstown



From left to right; Sgt. Maj. Scott Haymaker, Paula Haymaker, Cpl. Tiffany McMullen and Spc. Josh Haymaker. The three members of the family all served in the 28th Military Police Company in Johnstown. Josh is serving with the unit in the Middle East.

raising her young children.

“I want my children to see that no matter how difficult something is, like basic training or deployment, they can achieve it if they put their minds to it,” said McMullen.

“I also want my children to grow up with the same respect and admiration that I grew up with for the military.”

Scott Haymaker retired from the Johnstown police and now works for the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, providing state and local officers training.

He now resides in Charleston, South Carolina. He continues to serve at Fort Indiantown Gap as the Operations Sergeant Major for range control.

“Although I’m not with the 28th MP Co. anymore, I’m proud that my son and daughter are. They take so much pride in what they do,” said Scott Haymaker. “My wife Paula and I attend the military ball they hold every year to keep in touch with our MP family.”

***“Being an officer in Johnstown, and the unit being part of the community, it was the perfect place to serve. My son and daughter grew up around the 28th MP Co. and ended up joining that unit as well.”***

– SGM Scott N. Haymaker

**Make Memorial Day a Solemn Salute to the Fallen**

***For those who gave their lives for freedom, let Memorial Day be about giving thanks for their sacrifices and about reflecting on how they made this world a better place to live.***

***The PA Department of VFW salutes all service members who paid the ultimate sacrifice for freedom and we support their families.***



## U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs Ensures Veterans Have Same-Day Access to Emergency Mental Health Care

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' efforts to provide the best mental health care access possible, the VA is reminding veterans that it offers all veterans same-day access to emergency mental health care at any VA health care facility across the country.

"Providing same-day 24/7 access to mental health crisis intervention and support for veterans, service members and their families is our top clinical priority," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "It's important that they know that help is easily available."

The VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention is the national leader in making high-quality mental health care and suicide prevention resources available to veterans through a full spectrum of outpatient, inpatient and telemental health services.

Additionally, the VA has developed the National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide, which reflects the department's vision for a coordinated effort to prevent suicide among all service members and veterans. This strategy maintains the VA's focus on high-risk individuals in health care settings, while also adopting a broad approach to suicide prevention.

The VA has supported numerous veterans and has the capacity to assist more. In fiscal year (FY) 2018, 1.7 million veterans received the Veterans Health Administration mental health services. These patients received more than 84,000 psychiatric hospital stays, about 41,700 residential stays and more than 21 million outpatient encounters.

Nationally, in the first quarter of FY 2019, 90% of new patients completed an appointment in a mental health clinic within 30 days of scheduling an appointment, and 96.8% of established patients completed a mental health appointment within 30 days of the day they requested. For FY 2018, 48% of initial, in-person Primary Care–Mental Health Integration encounters were on the same day as the patient's PC encounter.

### Do You Need Help With Veterans Benefits?

**Full-time, VA-accredited VFW State Service Officers are ready to answer benefit questions. These phone numbers connect you with your nearest Service Officer, who can inform you about office locations and outreach sites.**

**Southeast PA/Philadelphia:** 215-381-3123 • **Northeastern PA:** 570-821-2535/2536

**Harrisburg/Reading/Lititz:** 717-234-7927 • **York Area/Gettysburg:** 717-884-1705

**Altoona/Johnstown:** 814-943-8164 • **Pittsburgh/Southwest PA:** 412-395-6259/6260

**Butler:** 724-287-4781 ext. 4579  
 • **Erie/Northwest PA:** 814-835-8494 • **Northcentral PA/State College:** 570-560-1382

Visit the Department's website [www.vfwpahq.org](http://www.vfwpahq.org), "Claims Help" for more information or call State HQ at (717) 234-7927.



**Pictured are Department Service Officer Elizabeth Salvador (left) assisting a veteran with claims forms and State Service Officer Chairperson Christine Smith speaking during a meeting with lawmakers.**

## Veterans Claims and Benefit Information

*This information is provided by the Department's Veterans Service Officer program. For assistance, call State HQs at (717) 234-7927 or see the office listing on this page. State HQs thanks the State of Pennsylvania for Act 66 Service Officer grant funds.*

### LEGISLATION WOULD INCREASE PRESUMPTIVE AO CONDITIONS

*(By Nikki Wentling/Stars and Stripes)*

A group of lawmakers introduced legislation that would add nine more diseases to a list of conditions presumed to be caused by the chemical herbicide Agent Orange, giving veterans who suffer from them a fast-track to VA disability compensation and care.

The Keeping Our Promises Act, adds prostate cancer, bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, hypertension, stroke, early-onset peripheral neuropathy, AL amyloidosis, ischemic heart disease and Parkinson-like syndromes to a list of diseases presumed to be caused by Agent Orange exposure during the Vietnam War.



Researchers with the National Academy of Medicine released findings in November that there was "suggestive" evidence that eight of the diseases could be caused by Agent Orange. For hypertension, researchers found that "sufficient" evidence exists.

VA experts have begun a "formal, deliberative review" of the National Academy of Medicine's latest report. The review is expected to be complete in the summer, at which time the agency will make recommendations about presumptive conditions, he said.

Recommendations would be sent to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, who would choose when—and whether—to act on them. The VA previously recommended that some conditions be added. After the last National Academy of Medicine report in 2016, the VA took 20 months to send recommendations to the White House that bladder cancer, hypertension, hyperthyroidism and Parkinson's-like tremors be added to the list.

The recommendation hasn't made it past the White House's Office of Management and Budget. Last year, VA officials told the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs that the Office of Management and Budget is waiting for results of ongoing mortality and morbidity studies, which could provide more evidence of a connection between the diseases and Agent Orange.

The bill is likely to face an uphill battle in Congress, where veterans and

advocates have fought for years to prove toxic exposures and secure VA benefits.

Attempts failed in Congress last year to approve benefits for "Blue Water" Navy veterans—sailors who served on ships off the coast of Vietnam and argue they were exposed to Agent Orange. The veterans could be close to getting benefits, but the victory was won in court, not Congress.

The VA opposed the legislative effort to approve benefits for Blue Water Navy veterans, citing high costs and insufficient scientific evidence.

On January 29, 2019, the Federal Circuit, in a decision of the court case *Procopio v. Wilkie*, overturned their previous decision in *Haas v. Peake*, restoring presumptive service-connected compensation for herbicide related conditions to Blue Water Navy veterans who served within the territorial seas of Vietnam during the war.

VA has filed a stay on all claims potentially affected by this decision.

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed VFW-supported H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019. The bill now heads to the Senate.

If it is signed into law, H.R. 299 will restore VA benefits to thousands of Blue Water Navy Vietnam veterans who had their disability eligibility taken away in 2002 after regulatory changes.

The bill will also require the VA to contact those veterans who had filed claims that were later denied. Those veterans could be eligible for retroactive benefits. Contact your U.S. senator to ask for their support.

### VETERANS CRISIS LINE

Veterans, family members, and care providers can start a free, confidential conversation with an experienced and caring VA responder by calling the Veterans Crisis Line. If you are concerned about the well-being of a veteran, call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1.

Veterans can chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat) to get support anonymously. A text message can also be sent to 838255 to connect to a VA responder. These resources can be used even if a veteran is not registered with the VA or enrolled in VA health care.

For veterans who are not in immediate crisis, there are many treatment options and resources available. One universal resource is the Make the Connection website ([www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net)), which provides a way for veterans to privately explore mental health issues and difficult life experiences, and directs them to sources of support.

## PENNSYLVANIA VETERANS HOMES



- Delaware Valley Veterans' Home, Phila., 215-856-2718**
- Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center, Scranton, 570-961-4348**
- Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home, Hollidaysburg, 814-696-5352**
- Pennsylvania Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, Erie, 814-878-4917**
- Southeastern Veterans' Center, Spring City, 610-948-2406**
- Southwestern Veterans' Center, Pittsburgh, 412-665-6782**

*We are here to make you feel at home!*



Visit [dmva.pa.gov](http://dmva.pa.gov) and click on Veterans Homes.

# WATCHING YOUR BACK: MEMBERSHIP PROTECTS YOUR INTERESTS

## VFW's Legislative Priorities Protect Your Benefits and Future

*One of the most important benefits of VFW membership is knowing that State and National HQs staff work hard to represent the interests of veterans and their loved ones in the state and federal legislative process. While members move forward with their lives, the VFW speaks at legislative hearings, monitors progress on key bills, meets with lawmakers and their staffs, participates in VA review projects, speaks with the President, and makes sure legislators treat veterans with respect and honor.*

*Here is a list of federal legislative priorities created by National HQ as outlined to Congress during the VFW's annual Legislative Conference in Washington by National Commander B.J. Lawrence (shown at right) to protect the interests of veterans, our military troops and their families.*



Photo from VFW National HQ

### **BUDGET - To fully fund veterans and defense programs, Congress must:**

- Reform the dysfunctional federal budget process and end sequestration.
- Authorize the VA to receive reimbursements from TRICARE and Medicare.
- Ensure the POW/MIA Accounting mission is fully funded.
- Never reduce one veteran's benefits to pay for another.

### **HEALTH CARE - To ensure service members and veterans receive timely access to high-quality health care without increasing cost shares, Congress, VA and DOD must:**

- Properly start VA Mission Act of 2018.
- Reduce the number of service members and veterans who die by suicide.
- Preserve the integrity of TRICARE.
- Modernize VA & DOD health IT systems.
- Strengthen health care and research for mental health and traumatic brain injuries.
- Expand gender-specific programs and competencies.
- Research and effectively treat health conditions associated with toxic exposures.
- Prevent the increase of pharmaceutical copayments and remove copayment requirements for preventative medicines.
- Research the efficacy of medical cannabis.
- Expand telehealth services.
- Make nursing home eligibility part of the VA health benefits package.
- Keep community care reimbursement rates competitive with private insurance.

### **DISABILITY ASSISTANCE & MEMORIAL AFFAIRS - To ensure veterans and their dependents have timely access to earned benefits, Congress and VA must:**

- Properly implement the modernized appeals process.
- Consider treatment of presumptive

conditions as a claim for disability compensation.

- Establish presumptive disability compensation benefits for hearing loss, tinnitus, TBI and for health conditions associated with toxic exposures.

- Increase burial allowances to account for inflation and include spouses' information on all headstones.

- Authorize more than one adaptive automotive grant for disabled veterans.

- Reform the Gulf War Illness Disability Benefits Questionnaire.

- Transfer control of the Mare Island Naval Cemetery to the NCA.

- Update regulations and laws governing claims for digital claims processing.

- Expand VA wartime benefits to early Vietnam veterans.

### **EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITION ASSISTANCE**

**- To ensure veterans succeed after leaving military service, they must have access to:**

- High-quality and sustainable education benefits.
- Strong employment and training programs.
- Lifetime Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment services.
- Small business development opportunities.
- Civilian credentials or academic credit for military training.
- Hiring preferences in civil service and with large government contractors.
- National veterans treatment court advocates.
- Education and training in new and expanding career fields.
- Timely and improved transition assistance including access to programs for veterans after they leave military service.
- Affordable housing and wraparound services to avoid homelessness.

- Equitable education benefits for dependents regardless of where they live.

- Improved character of discharge review and appeals procedures.

### **MILITARY QUALITY OF LIFE**

**- To maintain a quality, comprehensive benefits and retirement package that is the backbone for an all-volunteer force, Congress and DOD must:**

- Increase military base pay comparability with private sector wages.

- Protect and improve on-base quality of life programs.

- Ensure that military housing is safe and free of toxic substances.

- End the military retirement pay and VA disability compensation offset.

- Eliminate the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Comp. offset.

- Increase the government's Thrift Savings Plan contribution.

- Eliminate sexual assaults in the military.

- Establish the Armed Forces University.

- Improve stability and support for military families.

### **U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY, FOREIGN AFFAIRS & POW/MIA**

**- To fully support U.S. troops and their mission to fight the war on terrorism and protect our nation's citizens and interests around the world, Congress, DOD and DHS must:**

- Expand partnerships with host nations and private/public organizations to achieve the fullest possible accounting of U.S. military personnel missing from all wars.

- Secure America's borders.

- Preserve the all-volunteer force.

- Maintain a substantial military presence in the Republic of Korea.

**Play a role in the process by ensuring that these priority goals are enacted. Sign up today for the VFW's Action Corps Weekly e-newsletter at [www.vfw.org/actioncorps](http://www.vfw.org/actioncorps).**

## VFW Legislative Victories

*While its legislative victories for veterans started in 1917, the VFW's achievements just over the last 35 years alone have drastically improved the lives of veterans of all ages, proving the VFW's motto:*

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

- 1983** - Emergency Veterans Job-Training Act
- 1984** - Montgomery GI Bill Veterans; Dioxin & Radiation Exposure Comp. Standards Act; (P.L. 98-542); Agent Orange & Atomic Exposure
- 1987** - New GI Bill Continuation Act
- 1988** - The Radiation-Exposed U.S. Veterans Compensation Act; Department of Veterans Affairs Act; and Veterans Judicial Review Act
- 1989** - VA becomes a Cabinet Department, Court of Veterans Appeals
- 1990** - Agent Orange service-connection
- 1991** - Agent Orange benefits, Persian Gulf War Veterans & Veterans Benefits Improvement Acts
- 1992** - Veterans Health Care Act
- 1996** - Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform
- 1999** - Veterans 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 and GI Bill for the 21st Century signed into law
- 2009** - Advanced Appropriations for VA
- 2010** - Family Caregiver Legislation is 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; 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 U.S. Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act; In-State Tuition for Post 9/11 GI Bill; Veterans Funding First Act; Advance appropriations for VA Benefits; Advance Appropriations for VA mandatory accounts
- 2015** - Suicide Prevention for American Vets Act
- 2016** - Toxic Exposure Research Act; Enhanced fertility/adoption services
- 2017** - Forever GI Bill; Streamlined claims appeals process; VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act; GWOT Memorial; Improved VA hiring & retention authorities; Veterans Choice improvements and expansion; Declassifying Toxic Exposure Documents; Prevented TRICARE co-payment increases
- 2018** - Expanded caregiver benefits to veterans of all eras; Consolidated community care into one improved program; Established a process to evaluate and improve VA facilities to better serve veterans; Defeated proposed cuts to Individual Unemployability

## Post 7714's Jet and Marquee Draw Attention to VFW Mission

Story by Michael P. Mauer, District 29 PAO, Post 914 Life Member and Desert Storm veteran.

Veterans of Foreign Wars posts are justifiably proud of the memorabilia displayed in their social halls and meeting places. But few can boast anything as conspicuous as a fighter jet.

Located directly across from a strip mall on busy Steubenville Pike, Post 7714's F-86 Sabre jet catches the eyes of hundreds if not thousands of shoppers and commuters daily. Seen by an equal number next to the aircraft is a marquee that displays maxims relating to teamwork and community involvement.

And like that F-86 jet once did over the skies of Western Pennsylvania, VFW Post 7714 Post Commander Robert A. Haag is hoping some of those ideas displayed on the sign take off too – especially over the holiday seasons.

"We're more than just a club—especially during the holidays," said Haag, an Army veteran who served in Vietnam. "We're here to help veterans, their families and our community. We especially like to extend a hand during Christmas, when many of our local service members from reserve and active duty units may be deployed."

The post holds a children's Christmas party that is open and free to the public as well as a holiday party for the unit's members. According to Haag, these types of outreach events have been going on since the post was chartered in 1947.

"We're hoping to reach out to all local veterans and let them know that the post is here to support them," said Haag. "We're proud to be part of an outfit that is committed to helping veterans, who in many cases are also our neighbors."

To help fund these holiday activities for veterans and their families, the post holds various events. An example of a recent successful fundraiser was a purse bingo. Except for operational costs, all money raised through this effort went toward the post's benevolent fund. From there, it directly helps veterans as well as funds a network of VFW service officers.

"Perhaps the biggest benefit to joining the VFW is learning what programs are available to assist veterans," said Martin Morris, a Vietnam veteran who is Post 7714's service officer. "Pension programs, jobs programs and medical help is available



VFW Montour Valley Post 7714 Commander Robert A. Haag stands next to his unit's F-86 Sabre jet.

for veterans. Post service officers are trained to guide veterans to the agencies that can best help them."

Funds raised by Post 7714 help VFW state service officers link veterans to benefits merited through their military service. "Any veteran can get free access to a VFW service officer to assist with benefits," Morris said.

Pittsburgh-area posts like 7714 have supported local student scholarship programs, and taken part in fundraising activities for the Arthritis Foundation.

Locally, VFW Post 7714 participates in many activities, such as in ceremonies honoring veterans at the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies, helping at the VA Hospital in Pittsburgh and supporting scout troops.

During the holidays, Post 7714 steps up its service to those in need. It becomes a designated drop-off point for the Marine Toys For Tots program, and teams with American Legion Wesoloski-Hays Post 335 to increase hospital visitations.

"Many of these veterans have no families, and many are homeless," the post commander said. "The VA takes care of their medical needs, but our donations help give them personal care items and other things to make them more comfortable."

"When we served, the motto was no man left behind," Haag said. "I would like to say our motto now is no man forgotten."

In recent years, filling the ranks with new members has become a greater challenge for Post 7714. Although the group welcomes social members, veterans are needed to keep the unit moving forward, Haag said.

"We've got something good here that helps veterans," the commander said. "It has been going for more than 100 years, and we'd like to help keep it going for hundreds more."

**"We're more than just a club—especially during the holidays. We're here to help veterans, their families and our community... We're proud to be a part of an outfit that is committed to helping veterans, who in many cases are our neighbors."**

**— Robert A. Haag  
Post 7714 Commander**

## Pocono Raceway to Assist VFW in Helping Vets

The mission of Pocono Raceway Military Affairs Department is to support all of our military heroes, both past and present. The department is moving forward with this mission, working together with the Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars, and is pleased to support the Pennsylvania VFW by donating a portion of race tickets to the VFW to support assistance programs for veterans and military personnel.

Tickets must be purchased through this campaign to generate a donation. To purchase tickets for upcoming events, visit <https://www.poconoraceway.com> and click "Military Affairs" in the top left corner of the page. *Thanks for your support, Pocono Raceway!*



## Loyalty Day Event Spreads Patriotism in Capitol

The PA Department's Loyalty Day program on May 1st drew a patriotic crowd, which celebrated freedom and honored veterans from all eras. Held inside the State Capitol, the event featured PA Adjutant General Anthony Carrelli as the keynote speaker. MG Carrelli thanked the VFW for leading the public in honoring veterans and military personnel.

Speakers also included State Commander Thomas Hanzes, Vice Chairman of the State Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Robert Mensch, Department Auxiliary President Charlotte Swogger Lopes and State Loyalty Day Program Chairman James Manser.



## VFW General Orders

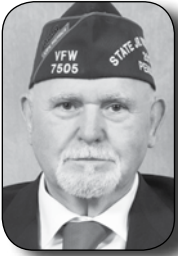
1. Per Section 213 of the National Bylaws, Posts that have not submitted a properly completed Post Election Report by June 1 are in arrears and shall be deprived of all representation in District, Department and National Conventions. Such representation will be restored upon proper adjustments of such deficiencies. Posts that have registered delegates for the Department and National Conventions will not receive credentials until the Posts satisfy their arrearages.

2. Attention is directed to the provision of Section 222 (d) of the National Bylaws, "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(s) online through the Online Membership System (OMS). Posts failing to comply with this provision will be considered delinquent and in arrears.

BY COMMAND OF NATIONAL COMMANDER B.J. LAWRENCE  
ATTESTED BY NATIONAL ADJUTANT GENERAL KEVIN JONES.

## The VFW's Future Starts Today—Let's Gear Up and Get Out

Wayne D. Perry, State Sr. Vice Commander - wayper@zoominternet.net



I join the other officers of our great Department of PA VFW in thanking those who have been actively recruiting and retaining members this year.

We are in the best Department membership shape that we've been in for many years because of our post and district leaders, and individual members, who took our membership challenge seriously. We should be above 99.5% on the state level when you read this. We have until June 30 to reach 100%, which last occurred about 15 years ago.

So let's end the 2018-19 program year strong, and bring our Department back above 100% for State Commander Thomas Hanzes who has certainly given this year his best possible effort.

Our State VFW has a lot to be proud of in program strength and leadership. Let's show the nation that we are the best by striving to be first again in membership.

The transition into the 2019-2020 year will come quick. As part of looking forward to becoming state commander at the convention, I ask that you remember what worked well for you during this year and make plans to continue your efforts.

We need to train our post officers about how to effectively carry out VFW leadership roles and how to communicate. All too often, we receive complaints at State Headquarters for things that should not have occurred if leaders had done their jobs better and communicated better.

If possible, please try to work out problems at the post level. District and Department officials are here to help you, but first you need to help yourself by addressing—or better yet preventing—problems. Remember always that respect, honor, mentoring and integrity go a long way to keeping things running smoothly.

I look forward to being your Commander. My theme will be "Dedication and Honor," so let's dedicate ourselves to the VFW's mission. Join us in gearing up and getting out there!

## Large Crowd Enjoys VFW's Women Veterans Retreat

Amy MacKenzie, Women Veterans Chairwoman - quartermaster@ephratavfw.org



The 2019 Women Veterans Retreat, held March 29-31, in Ephrata (Lancaster County), was the 6th year that the VFW Department of Pennsylvania has sponsored a Women Veterans Retreat.

One hundred women participated in the weekend program. Women traveled from across the state to attend, representing all branches of service and the VFW, AMVETS, American Legion and other veteran organizations.

We had two female WWII veterans present and, new this year, several "Future Sailors" joined us for lunch. These young women, who recently enlisted in the US Navy, were still in high school and college. The women veterans shared their experiences with the students to encourage and prepare them for their new adventure.

The weekend started Friday evening with social time at VFW Post 3376 in Ephrata, where the women enjoyed refreshments and relaxed after their travels. VFW Department Commander Thomas Hanzes greeted each veteran and thanked them for their service.

Saturday workshops included a presentation on benefits given by VFW Service Officer Christine Smith, with a special focus on women's health issues. The agenda also featured presentations by a nutrition counselor; the non-profit "Wills for Heroes" organization that assists veterans with free will preparation; a Mental Health Awareness expert who

provided peer-to-peer counseling; the Toastmasters group who gave tips about improving public speaking; honing leadership skills; and several other topics.

Saturday afternoon's speaker highlight was Dr. Eleanor Isaacson, who spoke about growing up in Dresden, Germany under Hitler's Regime. While a difficult topic to hear, she had the audience spellbound and they urged her to continue speaking after her formal speech was over. She reminded us about the importance of living for each day and appreciating the gifts we have been given in life.

Saturday's dinner was also at Post 3376. VFW State Adjutant/Quartermaster John B. Getz Jr., spoke on behalf of the Department. Lori McMath Varner, Ms. Veteran America 2019 Semi-Finalist, outlined the Ms. Veteran America program. Post 3376's Commander thanked all women veterans for their service.

Attendees were asked to contribute \$30.00 towards the event; aside from that small fee the entire weekend of food, lodging and incidentals was made possible through donations from VFW districts, posts and auxiliaries across Pennsylvania.

Additional donations were received from two American Legion Posts and numerous local businesses in Ephrata contributed as well. A total of \$19,185.00 was donated to this event!

I have been asked by Department Sr. Vice Commander Wayne Perry to chair this committee again for 2020 and have accepted. I am currently scouting out retreat locations with the goal of holding it in a more centrally located area.

Thank you for your service!

## A Winning Attitude and Team Approach Create Success

Ronald J. Peters, State Jr. Vice Cmdr. - acavrp@hotmail.com



It's hard to believe that there is less than a month left before we meet again at the State Convention in Erie. I am excited about the success our Department of

Pennsylvania is having with membership growth and our strong work on VFW service programs!

This success hasn't come by accident. Because of your hard work, this year's progress with keeping our numbers strong has been impressive, both through attracting new members and bringing back previous members. Congratulations to all who have seen this positive development at their post and district levels.

Winning teams score victories because they develop a winning culture. I have watched this happen in just about all regions of the Department as I traveled to represent the State VFW.

The posts and districts that consistently succeed simply make a decision to not accept failure. This positive attitude creates a culture of teamwork with everyone on the team doing their part to

keep the progress moving forward.

Once a winning mindset is established, post and district leaders invite, encourage and inspire others to join in. With a little education about what the VFW stands for and the programs we use to accomplish our mission, you'll create an enthusiastic team ready to work diligently on recruiting and informing our communities about the impact of VFW programs.

I recently went to a local university to attend a job fair for veterans. This created an opportunity to speak with veterans about our organization. By interacting with veterans that day, we signed up five new members. It was that easy.

Reach out to local universities and colleges to create opportunities to get face time with veterans. Show support for Student Veterans Chapters. Don't let occasional negative stories define the VFW. Let's show the VFW's best side.

Comrades, let's continue to develop a caring atmosphere in our posts. Let's strive to create a family friendly, service oriented culture that helps our Department of PA team succeed in its mission.

I look forward to seeing you at the Convention and while traveling throughout our state!

## Facts and Figures

### Get Ready for a Well-Deserved Convention Celebration

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



Comrades, by now VFW post elections have been carried out. Your quartermaster should have processed your post election results through National Headquarters. If not, do so as soon as you can.

We are getting ready for the Department's 100th State Convention, set for June 12-15. Our leadership is planning activities to make this event a memorable celebration of all that our Department has accomplished between the 1919 State Convention and our 2019 gathering.

Our annual Patriotic Rally will feature a VFW Band, along with bagpipers and the stage show company "Re-Creation," which consists of young men and women who do a great job entertaining veterans who now live

in veterans hospitals all over the nation.

The State Convention will showcase VFW success stories and awards which prove that we earn our motto, *No One Does More for Veterans*.

During the Convention, we also hope to celebrate the fact that the Department will be "100% plus" in membership—the first time that we've reached this goal in many years.

I hope that all quartermasters are using the VFW online system to process membership updates. This technology makes your life and job so much easier. If you need help with using this system, please get in touch with me.

Please plan to attend one of the summer Post Officer Training Institute programs. See page 13 for more details about these important officer information sessions.

*Thank you for all you do for veterans and their families!*

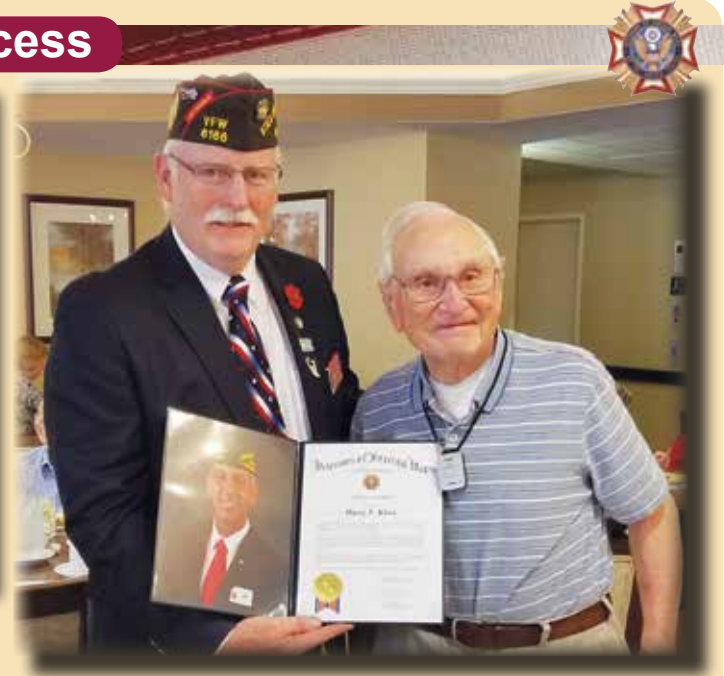
**YOU FOUGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY.  
NOW JOIN US IN THE FIGHT  
FOR VETERANS.**



**Focus on Mission Success**



One hundred female veterans enjoy camaraderie during the Department's 2019 Women Veterans Retreat.



State Community Service Chairman Donald Ramsey helps the Pennsylvania VFW and Hermitage Post 6166 honor World War II veteran Harry F. Kloss for celebrating his 100th birthday recently. He received a VFW certificate from the national commander.



West Mifflin Post 914 Intrepid recognizes four outstanding cadets recently during the 15th Annual Air Force Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps Banquet at the Westwood Golf Club. Receiving awards from the Post are Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Renee Salapa, Cadet Senior Airman Riley Munsie, Cadet Senior Airman Ryan Smoley and Cadet Senior Airman Ashley McCalla from West Mifflin Area High School. Pictured also are VFW Post 914 Commander Jake Bradich, left, and Quartermaster Gary Ruston.



Presenting a donation to the Venango County Toys for Tots program are Oil City Post 464 Commander Jason Reed, Sr. Vice Commander Bob Davis, Jr. Vice Commander Jeff Smith, Trustee Dave Reddinger and Chaplin Tim Struss.



Greensburg Post 33 held a Remembrance Service on National POW/MIA Recognition Day at the Post home. Shown at left are Post Honor Guard members lowering the flag in honor of POW/MIA.



Members of Conshohocken Post 1074 lead off a local St. Patrick's Day Parade by presenting colors. Pictured from left are Commander George Burchard, Quartermaster Tom Smith, members Jay Kunaszuk, Paul Ledebur, Mark Kevlar, and Jr. Vice Commander Dean Bagnaud.

**DUE TO THE MANY PHOTOS RECEIVED AT STATE HQ, SOME PICTURES ARE BEING HELD FOR THE NEXT ISSUE. PLEASE NOTE: VFW NEWS CANNOT REPRODUCE NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS. ASK YOUR LOCAL PAPER FOR PERMISSION TO REPRINT A PHOTO AND SEND THE FILE OR PRINT (WITH THE PERMISSION STATEMENT) TO DSANDMAN@VFWPAHQ.ORG.**

## Focus on Mission Success



Selinsgrove Post 6631 Commander Doug Hammett and Quartermaster Harold Aucker present a \$500 donation to the Dauntless Hook and Ladder Fire Company recently. All posts are encouraged to support their local first responder units financially and by nominating fire personnel, police officers and EMTs for Pennsylvania Department's Safety Awards.



Huntingdon Post 1754 supports the local Military Share Program, which provides food for military families and veterans facing hard times. Food for the program is provided through the Central PA Food Bank. Twenty-five Post volunteers pass out food items each month to about 120 families.



Members and veteran guests of Indiana Post 1989 enjoy a veterans appreciation picnic that the Post held for its members and the community.



Media Post 3460 Post Chaplain Ed Hess—a 99-year-old VFW life member—delivers a check to Elwyn School Program Supervisor Angoree Gooch to support school projects. Hess is a veteran of the World War II battle of Monte Casino in Italy. The donation was made in memory of Dick Hess. Also shown are Post Auxiliary Patriotic Instructor Ed Hess, Jr., and Post Honor Guard member Joe Strauch.



Tire Hill Post 4200 Commander Dennis Loushe and Senior Vice Commander John Rozum present a Department of Pennsylvania John Radko Certificate of Recognition to Detective Thomas Keirn of the Richland Township Police Department for his service to the Greater Johnstown Community. All VFW posts are encouraged to submit entries for the State VFW Safety Awards, which give posts of any size an opportunity to gain local recognition by honoring those who keep communities safe.



Point Marion Post 747 donated and served a full homestyle Thanksgiving dinner to 140 community members. This outreach was deeply appreciated by everyone who enjoyed the tasty food, including those persons who might otherwise have gone without a holiday meal. Pictured are Post 747 officers John Fields and Ray "Chip" O'Neil, and volunteers Bobby Rhoades, Barb O'Neil and Justin Lincoln.



Focus on Mission Success



VFW life member Richard Broxton was presented with an award recognizing his many years of service as the chairman of the annual Clarks Summit Post 7069 Buddy Poppy campaign. Shown are Commander Donald Jones, Comrade Broxton and Post Chaplain Patrick Williams.

Blair Post 5821 provides the local Military Service Group (Honor Guard) with a ride on its "Pride of the Vets" float during patriotic holidays, including Memorial Day and Veterans Day. The Honor Guard, consisting of VFW and Legion members, participates in many activities including flag raising ceremonies, civic functions and Salvation Army "Red Kettle Days" during the Christmas season.



State Commander Thomas Hanzes presents a Department Citation to North Union Post 8543 Commander Carl Stockton for more than 25 years of participation in Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. Pictured from left are State Commander Hanzes and Past State Commander Allen Q. Jones.



In District 27, District Commander Robert Body honors Westmoreland County Volunteer Van Drivers for their service to veterans who rely on county transportation for medical appointments. Certificates were awarded to the drivers. Pictured from left are Al Birch, Ray Mitchell, Director for Westmoreland County Department of Veterans Affairs Matt Zamosky, Marty Grosely, Commander Body and Marty Pattyn.



Conshohocken Post 1074 honors Audrianna Bickings for her dedication over the past two years to send Christmas cards to troops overseas. Working with family, friends and students, she sent 275 cards along with candy. The Post donated \$200 to support her project. Pictured with Audrianna are (from left) club VP Howard Daywalt, Quartermaster Tom Smith, Sr. Vice Commander Walt Hartnett, Commander George Burchard and Jr. Vice Commander Dean Begnaud.



State Commander Thomas Hanzes, his Chief of Staff James Lewis and District 18 Commander Dave Gyger thank Halifax Post 5750 staff for raising funds for veterans facing hardship through a Buddy Poppy drive.

## Focus on Mission Success



VFW officials participate in many activities to stay engaged in their communities. District 1 leaders recently thanked veterans for their service during the opening of the World War II Veteran Bernard Stepanski Library inside of Deer Meadows Retirement Community in Philadelphia. Pictured inside of the library is retired Department Service Officer and Past District 1 Commander Cliff Jeffries and his wife, Auxiliary President Judy Jeffries. Cliff currently serves as the District 1 Chief of Staff.



Yardley Post 6393 recently solicited donations from area businesses to support veterans assistance groups. Commander Russ Davidson is shown accepting a \$650 donation from Coldwell Banker Hearthside Realtors in Newton. The funds will be given to the PA Wounded Warriors. Also shown are Washington Crossing National Cemetery Honor Guard Bugler Timothy Ghebrles and Honor Guard President Robert Craven, along with CB representatives. The Honor Guard also received a donation.



Past State Commander Thomas Brown (Post 3460), State Judge Advocate Frank McGovern (Post 3460) and John Crussard (Post 928) recently visited St. Bernadette school in Drexel Hill to demonstrate and explain the flag folding ceremony.



District 29 Commander William Roland recently expressed the VFW's gratitude for the service of State Senator Jim Brewster 45th District (middle) and Mayor Michael Cherepko of McKeesport. Both elected officials are strong supporters of veterans.



During the York Fair, Littlestown Post member Larry Altoff (left) presents a pin to a 102-year-old WWII USMC Marine veteran John Peiser while District 21 Commander Rick Olivitt listens to a story told by the Purple Heart recipient. County and local fairs serve as effective platforms for VFW posts to meet veterans and recruit new members.



During the annual Etters Post 537 Public Safety Awards Dinner, Post Commander Joe Colonna presents the Firefighter of the Year Award to Kyle Harbold. Post 537 seeks nominations from township supervisors and local government officials.



During its March meeting, District 16 honored its *Voice of Democracy* and *Patriot's Pen* winners including third-place PP winner Sam Mahoney of Post 7155. Shown with Mahoney are District Commander Jonathan Bittner (left) and District Jr. Vice Chairman Jim Manser, the District's VOD/PP chairman.

**National VOD Winner ... continued from page 1**

young American. "By writing these essays, my generation, and many after, can show their deep appreciation for the rights that our veterans have protected for us and the importance of how we use them."

For winning their Department contests, Troll and other state winners were invited on a tour of Washington. "My trip was one of the best experiences I will ever have in my life. Being in our nation's capital, seeing so many incredible and inspirational sights and places, surrounded by representatives from all over the nation and the world, was truly the most awe-inspiring experience I could imagine," she noted.

While learning about military history and reading stories about veterans' service, she developed a deep appreciation for the VFW's mission and the programs used to carry out the organization's motto, "No One Does More for Veterans."

"I have learned more and more about what VFW programs do and the importance of its functions. The VFW provides a home and shelter for our veterans, while fighting for better conditions, rights and welfare of veterans all over America."

One thing is for sure, Troll's participation in the VOD program has sparked a patriotic celebration in her young life that honors veterans and encourages others to respect their service, regardless of when and where they wore their military uniforms.

**Editor's Note: Printed below is VOD Champion Troll's essay.**

*"It started out as a mundane Monday morning with the shriek of my alarm clock waking me up and dragging me off to school and work. I went through the motions lackadaisically until, later that day, I looked up during my food service job to see a man missing his right arm from the elbow down.*

*Just as he walked out the door, a lump lodged in my throat and my stomach crawled into my chest as I caught the proud, golden words on his black cap: United States Marine Corps Veteran. I spent the rest of the day with that veteran on my mind.*

*He, along with every veteran including my grandfather and uncle, sacrificed everything they had and everything they were to protect the basic human rights of every American, such as the right to religious freedom, the right to free speech, and the right to vote.*

*However, I'm an American teenager. I'm worried about turning old enough to drive, not vote. Midterms and Inauguration Day will take place with or without my one teeny unmeaningful vote. Yet, a few days later, I found myself lost in the chapters of my AP history book on our Founding Fathers.*

*Suddenly, I was in Philadelphia on Sept. 17, 1778 at the Constitutional Convention. I found myself surrounded by the giants of history who, from a fragile moment in our nation's birth, orchestrated in the 2nd Article of our Constitution, a voting system of checks and balances guaranteeing every American citizen, not just the politically elite, the right to help decide who represents us, what issues they address, and how they spend our money.*

*Every American citizen deserves the efficacious right and fundamental responsibility to make his or her voice and opinion heard, and that's exactly what voting grants us. To quote President Lyndon Johnson's maxim, "This right to vote is the basic right without which all others are meaningless." My vote matters because my rights matter.*

*Fast-forwarding 133 years and 200 pages, I found myself in Washington D.C. in 1920 on Aug. 18. After a civil war, several constitutional amendments, and risky suffragette activism, people of every race and gender gathered to celebrate the quintessential right to vote that all citizens have finally been granted. Voting identifies*

*us as full American citizens whose opinions can influence the nation's future.*

*Many voters feel a sense of powerlessness since the chance that their one vote will solely determine the fate of the president is very slim. Nonetheless, when has America ever been about the individual? We are a nation as a whole, united, indivisible house under God, and each vote makes up a brick of that house. Whether black, white, man, or woman, our voices matter. My vote matters because I matter.*

*After 13 years and 7 more chapters, I landed in the company of hundreds of German citizens in the streets of Berlin on Jan. 30, 1933. Some were cheering exuberantly, declaring "Heil Hitler!" while others seemed frozen in fear, their expressions blank and chalky.*

*I swallowed with difficulty, knowing the millions of lives about to be lost to the horrors of war. Hitler stands as an optimal example of why pure democracies as well as total dictatorships lead to utter collapse.*

*Pure democracies allow for a candidate who is willing to exploit the fears and anger of the people to gain power, just as Hitler did. Nevertheless, when Hitler took complete control without the consent of the people, disaster struck.*

*A nation where the citizens are not allowed a fair say in their leadership always results in disintegration. With this conundrum in mind, our Founding Fathers created a democratic republic of the people, by the people, and for the people. My vote matters because the consequences matter.*

*Eighty-five years later, back in 2018, I wake up again to the shriek of my alarm. I have not seen that veteran with the black cap again, but I have encountered others, every one of whom I thank for their service and sacrifice.*

*Each of them, as well as many of my own friends who have recently enlisted in the military, have given Americans the meaningful, extraordinary privilege to influence the future by voting for what they feel will create a more perfect union.*

*My vote matters because their sacrifice matters.*

*Next year, thanks to those who have fought and fallen for my freedom, my vote will be counted in the polls, and it won't just count, it will matter.*

**Department Membership Update:  
99.6% of the 2017-18 Year-End Total**

Top five posts ranked by Membership Division			7 914	WEST MIFFLIN	118.75%	
Div.	Post	Location	%			
1	8951	WEST YORK	118.14%	7 3258	CHALFONT	114.77%
1	5958	TITUSVILLE	108.21%	7 8430	EAST MC KEESPORT	109.37%
1	1599	CHAMBERSBURG	97.72%	8 8023	ANNVILLE	117.56%
2	7505	MARS	107.05%	8 7134	PALMERTON	115.49%
2	249	BUTLER	105.64%	8 747	POINT MARION	111.62%
2	845	DOWNINGTOWN	104.27%	8 3090	PHILADELPHIA	108.43%
2	1446	RED LION	103.63%	8 6773	UNION CITY	108.33%
2	6704	MECHANICSBURG	103.49%	9 974	DARBY	108.62%
3	7599	TRANSFER	117.11%	9 5756	SEWICKLEY	108.06%
3	813	DU BOIS	112.99%	9 1424	MARIENVILLE	106.45%
3	3376	EPHRATA	110.89%	9 7250	CONFLUENCE	106.25%
3	464	OIL CITY	105.53%	9 6520	JEFFERSON TWN	105.45%
3	315	NEW CASTLE	105.37%	10 4040	PITTSBURGH	135.00%
4	3460	MEDIA	110.44%	10 3610	PHILADELPHIA	133.33%
4	6495	LEVITTOWN	106.76%	10 1063	PHILADELPHIA	120.00%
4	537	ETTERS	106.31%	10 6518	EXETER	119.56%
4	8803	TIDIOUTE	105.72%	10 1606	NEWELL	118.18%
4	4793	WAYNESBURG	103.57%			
5	1620	MIDDLETOWN	126.16%			
5	148	HARRISBURG	110.62%			
5	5542	BRISTOL	109.21%			
5	4795	WINDBER	108.74%			
5	3945	PITTSBURGH	106.49%			
6	6675	PITTSBURGH	112.40%			
6	879	CRANBERRY TWP	111.62%			
6	5286	FARRELL	109.75%			
6	32	LANSDALE	109.44%			
6	7463	NEW BLOOMFIELD	109.01%			

On May 20, Dept. membership stood at 73,434 members or 99.6% of the 2017-18 year-end total. So far this year, 1,495 new members and 530 reinstated members have been recruited. Posts should read the State Membership Program to learn about all membership contests and the criteria for "All-State" and "All-American."

Quartermasters are encouraged to visit [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org) 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 May 14th**  
*Congratulations District Commanders for Leading the Way Forward!*

- First Place: DISTRICT 1: 104.11% - Commander Zbigniew Laska
- Second Place: DISTRICT 20: 103.86% - Commander Richard Ellis
- Third Place: DISTRICT 25: 102.37% - Commander James Hodge
- Fourth Place: DISTRICT 10: 102.12% - Commander Chester Potoski
- Fifth Place: DISTRICT 19: 101.44% - Commander Jason Reed
- Sixth Place: DISTRICT 21: 101.43% - Commander Rick Olivitt
- Seventh Place: DISTRICT 23: 101.36% - Commander Ralph Delsordo
- Eighth Place: DISTRICT 18: 101.27% - Commander David Gyger
- Ninth Place: DISTRICT 8: 100.68% - Commander Thomas Goodman
- Tenth Place: DISTRICT 16: 100.62% - Commander Jonathan Bittner



**Holding the Top Spot:  
District 1 (Philadelphia County)  
Commander Zbigniew Laska**



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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.

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Membership Recruiting Moment**Recruiting Techniques from Across the Nation that Help Posts of All Sizes to Grow**

*The following text was excerpted from an article in the latest issue of VFW Magazine, written by Janie Dyhouse. Each PA VFW post is encouraged to establish a recruiting and retention work group, that meets regularly to identify ways to utilize these and other practices to grow membership.*

For posts and members who do not think they have the time, talent or techniques to plan and execute effective membership recruiting programs, these examples of how some of the most experienced nationally certified VFW recruiters sign up new members show that you don't have to reinvent the wheel and that you don't have to be a rocket scientist.

**ROBERT HARMON/POST 1831** - The Vietnam vet said if he's at the grocery store or filling up his car at the gas station, he tries to look for people wearing clothing indicating his or her veteran status. He also looks at haircuts, as that often is a clue if someone is active duty.

"I once saw a guy with a Fort Knox cap," Harmon said. "He had been a veteran for 15 years and no one had ever bothered to ask him to join the VFW."

Harmon also attends pre- and post-deployment ceremonies. He sets up a booth and hands out copies of *VFW magazine* and recruiting materials.

The Navy vet said with recruiting, the easy part is

asking because the worst that can happen is the person says "no." He said sometimes veterans have objections or opinions about the VFW, but Harmon maintains that it's best to come back with a positive response.

Harmon said the most frequent question he gets is, "What's in it for me?" He uses the VFW fact sheet to report all of the work the VFW does for veterans and families and responds with: "You may not need us now, but you will."

In his experience, some younger vets don't think they need the VFW, while some Vietnam vets remember not being welcome 50 years ago and decide not to join.

**TIM BORLAND/POST 9972** - Borland said it's important to recruit everywhere you go, even the most obscure places, such as a Walmart parking lot.

"I am never without an application," the Iraq War vet said. "Everywhere I go, I have an application. Even if I'm at the VFW, I have an application. No matter where I am or what I'm doing, I always recruit. Always remember, every veteran counts."

He advises recruiters to seek out vets by obvious signs such as military license plates or decals. Approach them by shaking hands and thank them for their service, he added.

"I find out where they were stationed and then I can relate because I was in the Army for 28 years," Borland said. "Most jump right on joining when I tell them what the

VFW does for veterans."

He finds that the two turning points for those unsure about signing up are VFW's lobbying efforts in the nation's capital and its scholarship programs.

"No one asked me to join. But it's that simple. Just ask the question. And never pass up the opportunity to thank a veteran and to let them know you appreciate their service."

**DENNY CRONER/POST 3886** - For Croner, who joined the VFW in 2004, recruiting is all about assessment. The Vietnam vet said after thanking a vet for his or her service, he determines their needs and whether or not the vet is eligible for membership.

The last question he asks is to what VFW post does the veteran belong—not whether or not he or she is a member.

"No matter what their answer, I have the information to help," said Croner, who served off the coast of Vietnam in 1973 on the USS Coral Sea. "I can combat any question they come up with. That's why I blueprint them first. Nine out of 10 times, I get a signature."

Croner said in addition to actively recruiting, it's important for VFW members to be visible in the community as a way of promoting the organization. He uses the media to let the community know about programs such as *Voice of Democracy* and *Patriot's Pen*. He wears a VFW cap, a Navy hat or other military-related clothing. On both of his

vehicles, he has VFW decals.

"I am a walking billboard," Croner said. "When I pull into a gas station, people start talking to me about the VFW."

**TIM WOODS/POST 2423** - Woods, who served in the Navy from 1995-2004, including in the aftermath of the USS Cole bombing, admits that he will talk to anyone.

Woods likes to emphasize how much the VFW fights for veterans' rights and that all vets need to stick together. If a potential recruit asks him the age-old question of, "What's in it for me?", Woods asks if the vet used the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

**CONTINUED ON TOP OF NEXT PAGE**

**Cigarette smoking is the top cause of preventable disease and death. Only 14% of Americans smoke, down from 21% in 2005. Many eligible members who never join the VFW cite smoking in canteens as a major reason for not signing up, in part because they are looking for a family friendly organization to support. Please keep these facts in mind when planning the future of your VFW post.**



**Take secondhand smoke off the menu**

**Visit the Chaplains Hill Section of Arlington National Cemetery**

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



Many of us have visited Arlington National Cemetery, located just west of Washington, D.C. in Virginia. We have walked the hallowed ground

to pay our respect to persons of national importance and to thousands who served in the military to dedicate their lives for freedom.

While there, almost everyone makes sure to see the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and observe the very moving, impressive changing of the guard. Probably the next most visited place is the Kennedy gravesite where an Eternal Flame honors JFK's legacy.

Among the many monuments and memorials on the grounds are the U.S. Coast Guard Memorial, the Spanish-American War Memorial, a Space Shuttle Challenger Memorial and a Korean War Contemplative Bench. Near the Visitors Center, there is a Women in Military Service for America Memorial honoring female veterans.

There is one area within Arlington National Cemetery I never knew existed until recently—Chaplains Hill, located in Section 2, on top of the hill with four monuments.

One monument, the first, was erected in 1926 and is dedicated to 23 chaplains of all faiths who died in World War I. The second monument, erected in 1981, is dedicated to 134 Protestant chaplains who died in World Wars I and II. The third monument, dedicated in 1989, is a Catholic Chaplains Memorial, dedicated to 83 Catholic chaplains who died in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. The fourth monument erected in 2011, is a Jewish Chaplains Memorial dedicated to 14 Jewish chaplains who died while serving in the Armed Forces.

Therefore, Chaplains from four wars are honored on Chaplains Hill. However, not every chaplain honored on the memorials is actually buried there. Those buried there include: the Army's first Chief of Chaplains, Col. John T. Axton of World War I; World War II Chief of Chaplains, Maj. Gen. William R. Arnold, who was the first chaplain to achieve the rank of General; and Maj. Charles Joseph Watters, who served in Vietnam and posthumously received the Medal of Honor for actions on Nov. 19, 1967.

So, the next time you visit Arlington National Cemetery, make sure you stop by Section 2 and walk up Chaplains Hill. When you do, you will realize:

- They need to build a walkway up

the hill to the monuments;

- There is no memorial on Chaplains Hill to the U.S. Military Chaplains who have lost their lives in the conflicts since Vietnam; and
- Apart from their name, there is no information about the chaplains honored on Chaplains Hill.

The Chapel of Four Chaplains, based in Philadelphia, has a primary mission to honor the selfless sacrifice of four U.S. Army Chaplains who gave up their life jackets when the troop transport U.S.A.T. Dorchester was sunk on Feb. 3, 1943. This organization is helping to rectify these things.

They have developed "The Chaplains Hill Project" (CHP, chaplainshill.org) to work with the U.S. Military, military historians, veteran service organizations, non-profit organizations and the families of those who are honored on the four monuments, to build a walkway, keep the list of Military Chaplains who died while serving in a conflict up to date, and collect photographs, stories, videos and other information to help honor these chaplains.

These chaplains, who risked their lives to keep our troops' spiritual welfare strong, deserve our gratitude. Please consider sending in a donation by using the CHP website.

*Blessings as you serve.*

“If they say yes, I say, ‘You are welcome. The VFW did that.’ After that they say, ‘I’m in.’”

Woods has found that some vets take longer than others to recruit. He recalled a vet he would speak with every chance he got, always asking him to join. On one occasion, the vet told him he wasn’t going to join because the VFW has a bar and he’s not going to a place that has a bar. Woods asked him if ever goes to Applebee’s or Olive Garden because those establishments also have bars. The vet signed up on the spot.

**TIM PETERS/POST 10010** - Peters, a 1991 Persian Gulf War vet, said the most important aspect of recruiting is getting out to talk to veterans. “Spend the time talking and know what you are talking about in terms of the VFW,” said Peters, who served in the Air Force for 20 years. “Most people don’t know what the VFW stands for or what we do. Our voice isn’t out there in the communities like it should be. Or they think the

wrong thing like smoky bars and war stories.”

“When you sign up young members, don’t expect them to be active for 10 or 20 years,” he said. “Tell them that’s OK because we need their voice on Capitol Hill, to have strength in numbers. Just say, ‘We have monthly meetings. We’d love to have you when you can make it.’”

**RICK HIGGINS/POST 4039** - When Higgins recruits, he looks for high-traffic areas such as Walmart and grocery stores.

“I try to talk to every single person who walks by,” said Higgins. “And always ask women, because anyone can be a vet. You don’t want to insult someone.”

Before Vietnam War veteran Higgins asks someone to join, he engages the vet in conversation to determine eligibility. He noted that the longer you talk to a potential member without signing the application, the more likely you are to lose them.

## OTIs Prepare Post Officers for Leadership

The Department has scheduled free summer Officer Training Institutes to help post officers understand and fulfill their duties. Dress is casual with VFW Cap. All sessions begin at 9 a.m. except on August 12 at Post 8724 which begins at 6 p.m.

**SOUTHWESTERN PA – SATURDAY, AUG. 3, 2019 - POST 128 JUNCTION CITY, 179 VIRGINIA AVE., ROCHESTER, PA 15074. (724) 774-4378**

**NORTHWESTERN PA – SUNDAY, AUG. 4, 2019 - POST 5958 BRUCE SHORTS, 206 ST. JOHN STREET, TITUSVILLE, PA 16354. (814) 827-6223**

**SOUTHCENTRAL PA – SUNDAY, AUG. 11, 2019 - POST 8896 RICHARD J. GROSS, 107 LOCUST ST EXT., EAST BERLIN, PA 17316. (717) 259-0124**

**NORTHCENTRAL PA – MONDAY, AUG. 12, 2019 - TRAINING STARTS 6:00 PM - POST 8724 DUNCANSVILLE MEMORIAL, 1665 NEWRY LANE, DUNCANSVILLE, PA 16635. (814) 695-9703**

**NORTHEASTERN PA – SATURDAY, AUG. 17, 2019 - POST 7963, WOZNAK PAVLOSKI, 272 MAIN ST., EYNON, PA 18403. (570) 876-0189**

**SOUTHEASTERN PA – SUNDAY, AUG. 18, 2019 - POST 6341 ROYERSFORD 730 SOUTH 4TH AVE., ROYERSFORD, PA 19468. (610) 948-0406**

All posts are encouraged to send several officers to these sessions. Training registration forms will be sent to post commanders and should be completed and sent back to State HQ in advance of the training date of interest.

## National VFW Teacher Award ... continued from page 1

“Having the opportunity to work alongside and tell the stories of our veterans is a great privilege. The veterans who fought for us are part of us, part of our High School, part of Pennsylvania, and part of our national history and fabric. (Veterans) reflect the best in us.

“No number of wreaths, no amount of music and memorializing will ever do them justice, but it is fitting that we honor them and their sacrifice. They were our fathers or mothers, our sons or daughters, our uncles or aunts, our husbands or wives, but most importantly they were our heroes. We should never forget their devotion and their sacrifice. They stand before us, marching into time and into shared memory, forever.”

As an advanced placement history teacher, Wagner’s approach to fostering an understanding among students about the sacrifices and accomplishments of veterans makes wartime stories jump off the computer screen. He uses examples about veterans’ experiences to demonstrate the range of emotions and various challenges faced by veterans, regardless of the chapter of history their service falls in.

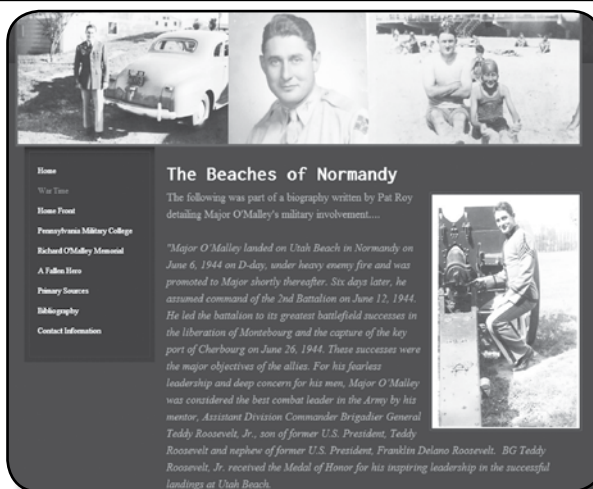
“In teaching World War II, I try to start each class with a story. It could be a personal experience, myth, historical event, or anything else that relates to the day’s lesson,” Wagner explains, noting that his father, Donald, served in the military and that his family’s military service dates back to the Revolutionary War.

“It could be the heroic story of John W. Minick, a resident of Carlisle, who became the hero at the Battle of the Hurtgen Forest and posthumously received the Medal of Honor. Or it could be the story of William T. McCabe, a graduate of our high school, who joined during WWII to help his single mom, and went on to become a glider pilot and participate in the D-Day invasion.”

His style of teaching grab students’ attention, which connects them with not only what the story is about, but how the story relates to them.

“These stories touch the core of who they are, and that inner sense which makes them human. As a philosopher once said, ‘The head does not hear anything until the heart has listened. The heart knows today what the head will understand tomorrow.’”

By using personal stories to underscore the fact that war history is real, his instruction leaves students with images and testimony that they can relate to since most



A screenshot of the “Silent Heroes Project” website.

of them have veterans in their families.

Through his “Silent Heroes” project, students explore the life and service of a local World War II veteran killed at Normandy—and other veterans—and create web pages that preserve their legacies.

Last year, Wagner’s project expanded to identify local Vietnam War veterans, leading to the construction of a Vietnam Wall of Honor which displays the names of more than 213 veterans and 10 flag cases in honor of the former students killed during the war.

Established in 1999, the Citizenship Education Teacher Award was established to recognize three exceptional teachers for their outstanding commitment to teach Americanism and patriotism to their students.

“Students who are lucky enough to have teachers like Kevin develop a deep sense of patriotism and understand the values and freedoms upon which our nation was founded,” said VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence.

“The VFW is honored to recognize the vital role America’s educators play in nurturing and encouraging the civic-minded leaders of tomorrow.”

Each of the three national recipients will receive an all-expense-paid trip to Orlando, Fla., where they will each be presented with a \$1,000 award for professional development and \$1,000 for their school during the

120th VFW National Convention, July 20-24.

VFW Post 477 was “exhilarated, but not surprised” by the news of Wagner’s selection for the award.

“As if his Vietnam Wall of Honor at the high school wasn’t enough, when I learned of his Silent Heroes project I immediately knew we had a “National Contender,” said Post Commander Rick Olson.

Commander Olson noted that, in hopes that other states might honor their silent heroes, Wagner created a guide for educators about how to effectively create a curriculum unit.

“Mr. Wagner periodically travels to states across the nation to extend the reach of his Silent Heroes project,” added Olson, who presented the award recipient with a certificate and check for \$500 at a School Board meeting.

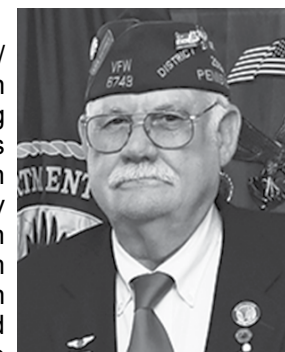
District 18 also attended the meeting to present Wagner with a certificate and check.

While VFW Teacher of the Year Wagner humbly describes his extraordinary education techniques as “just doing his duty and providing a service,” the significant impact of his teaching success lives on long after his students graduate.

Indeed, his ability to connect students with veterans’ stories and give life to their accomplishments—many of which were made while they were under incredible pressure and life-threatening situations—develops a greater appreciation for the cause of freedom and those who protect the nation.

## CORRECTION:

On page 7 of the March/April issue, a caption for the picture showing VFW representatives visiting the Lebanon VAMC incorrectly identified the person shown second from the right. The caption should have identified that VFW representative



as Jack Mognet, Commander of Jones Mills Post 6743. Thank you, Commander Mognet, for your service to the military and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

# The VFW Auxiliary ...

## Unwavering Support for Uncommon Heroes



The Department Auxiliary President Says...

### Your Passion and Successes are Impressive

By Charlotte Swogger Lopes - swoggerlopes51@gmail.com



Thank you Comrades, Sisters and Brothers:

I cannot thank you all enough for this wonderful honor and privilege to serve our veterans on a higher

level as Department President.

As I traveled the great state of Pennsylvania, and having the opportunity to visit the VA Health Care Centers, I have met many veterans whose health circumstances result in them living away from home. Yet, most of the time they had a smile to share when we visited them. You can make a tremendous difference in their lives even through just a short visit, some conversation and thanking them for their service.

I have truly enjoyed having the chance to travel to each district and meeting new people—including many who cannot attend Department functions. It has been awesome to make many new friends and to see the shared enthusiasm that exists for the VFW and its Auxiliary.

It is inspiring to learn about the many different ways that the Auxiliaries reach out to help our veterans. Being able to witness this broad service to veterans has

been thrilling. Experiencing and sharing this Pennsylvania Auxiliary pride has been a once in a lifetime experience.

So as my term enters its final months, I move forward with much joy and a deeper respect for our veterans thanks to all the terrific things that our post and district Auxiliaries do for our veterans.

Never forget the reason WHY you joined this organization. It has been inspirational to see many incredible people doing incredible things in our organization to benefit others. We need all of you to continue supporting our veterans.

I urge all Auxiliary leaders and members to share your ideas and information with others because your knowledge and experience is the foundation of our success. Without your support and teamwork, our foundation will crumble. We can never let that happen.

Thank you to every one of you for your dedication to our veterans and their families. Your enthusiasm and accomplishments have given me a wonderful feeling as your Department President.

Your great work pushed us higher in membership to 101.3% at press time.

Always be committed to "GETTING JUSTICE for OUR VETERANS".

### Hospitalized Veterans Need Our Visits and Support

By Ann Ray Begis, Auxiliary Hospital Chairperson - irsbaby1@verizon.net



Thank you to our Department President, Charlotte Lopes, for the opportunity to serve as the Hospital Chairman this past year. It was a rewarding experience after seeing all that the Auxiliaries did across this great state.

Our leaders and members have shown many ways of "Getting Justice for Our Veterans" and followed the president's theme, "Believe... We Can Do It."

It was amazing to see so many different events put on at and outside of the VA hospitals and local nursing facilities. There were bingo games, carnivals, fishing and shopping trips, entertainment, boat rides and so many more enjoyable events,

too numerous to mention. There were also many handmade items distributed across this great state.

Even though our year is coming to an end, please continue to support our veterans any way that you can. Every event or program that is held for hospitalized veterans helps them enjoy life more and reminds them that they are loved.

Saying 'Thank You' doesn't seem like enough, but your Department Auxiliary leaders mean it from the bottom of our hearts! Your support has made a terrific difference in many lives.

To all of the sisters, brothers and occasional volunteers, I wish you all good health and much success in our Auxiliary.

God Bless you and God Bless America!

### Spotlighting Our Auxiliary Activity



Clockwise from top: Many VFW and Auxiliary leaders and members gathered to honor National Auxiliary President Sandie Kriebel during her recent visit to Pennsylvania. As part of her tour, Department President Swogger Lopes, Department Conductress Valerie Decorte and Past Department President Mary Hetrick escorted National Auxiliary President Kriebel to the Fisher House in Pittsburgh, which offers free housing for families of veterans receiving VA care. Shown during a visit to the Wilkes Barre VAMC are Auxiliary Hospital Rep. Maryann Pauline, VFW Hospital Rep. Robert Hayes, Chief of Staff Connie Tobias, Hospital Chairman Ann Ray M. Begis and Dept. President Charlotte Lopes.

### Let Your Love for America and Freedom Always Show

By Mary Jean Cuddyre, Americanism Chairperson - gramamj75@gmail.com



*"Americanism is an unfailing love of country, loyalty to its institutions and ideas; eagerness to defend it against all enemies; undivided allegiance to the flag; and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity."*

Written in 1927 by a number of veteran's organizations, this definition explains how we should feel about our country (love, loyalty, eagerness, allegiance and desire). It also explains how we should act (defend and secure).

Americanism is constantly marked by patriotic celebrations, recognitions and remembrances, all wrapped in red, white and blue. We are proud of our country and those who protect us. We appreciate that we have the freedom to

fly our flag, worship in our own way, elect our leaders and disagree when we believe we must.

Recently, I was in the yard with my granddaughters (ages 2 and 6). The breeze had fanned our flag to full majesty atop the flag pole. As we looked up, I put my hand over my heart, started the pledge and they followed along. I wondered what they will encounter as adults.

America was founded and fought for by individuals who valued freedom more than life itself. They gave us a precious gift and along with that gift a tremendous responsibility to treat it with respect and dignity.

The United States of America must thrive and prevail against all adversity. She deserves all the love and loyalty we can provide.

*God bless America!*

Focus on Mission Success



Boy Scout Pack 10 Eagle Scout William Bednarz presents his Eagle Scout Project of two benches to Yardley VFW Post 6393. Pictured from left are Tom Sciortino, 6393 Scout Liaison Officer; Mike DeBonis, Sr. Service Officer, Scout Bednarz and Russ Davidson, Commander.



At New Bloomfield Post 7363, State Commander Thomas Hanzes gathers with Post leaders, including Commander Robert Snook and volunteers who just finished operating a Military Share Program with the support of the Central PA Food Bank. Commander Hanzes enjoyed touring the recently renovated Post facility and commended the volunteers for their outstanding support of military families and veterans in need.



Clarks Summit Borough donated a tree to Memorial Post 7069, honoring deceased members. Shown are Steuart Bailey, Auxiliary President Paula Thompson, Eugene Barkasy, John Arre, Michael Rogan, Richard Broxton, Commander Donald Jones, Mayor Herman Johnson\*, Councilman Dominic Scott\*, Shade Tree Commissioner Mollie Philbin, Councilman Patrick Williams\*, John Yevonishon, George Yarns, VFW Department Inspector and Post Quartermaster/Adjutant Michael McLane, and William Toms (\* indicates Post member).



Millersville Post 7294 includes a public Easter Egg Hunt in its community activity program, which draws many children and parents. The event reminds veterans and citizens that the VFW Post is a positive, relevant force in the neighborhood.



David Davenport (center), a member of the Nicholson Masonic Lodge, accepts a \$5,000 check from members Kingsley Post 8488 to support the St. Jude's Hospital for Children. Pictured from left are Post Sr. Vice Commander Mark Webster, Post Commander William Harmer, Davenport, Canteen Manager Al Urda and Quartermaster Willie Zerfoss.



Every year, the Department's Motorcycle Ride for Homeless Veterans generates thousands of dollars to support programs that assist veterans without permanent housing. Shown here are Coalport Post 7043 Commander Barry Peters, Post Auxiliary President Donna Peters and other members of the Auxiliary, who made a \$500 donation to the Ride program. State Homeless Veterans Chairman Dwayne Anders and State Commander Thomas Hanzes accepted the check and thanked all posts who contributed.

Focus on Mission Success

PERIODICALS



At McMurray Post 764, many Post members and veterans from the community participated in a recent Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home event. Also in attendance were State Representative Natalie Mihalek, Past State Commander Dominic DeFranco and Past Department Judge Advocate Robert DeSousa, representing U.S. Senator Pat Toomey's office. By holding veterans appreciation events, posts can honor veterans from all service periods while informing eligible veterans about the many benefits of VFW membership.



North Pocono Post 5207 honors its *Voice of Democracy* and *Patriot's Pen* essay winners during a banquet. Pictured are, front row from left - Post Adjutant Joseph Zurcher; *VOD* winner Morgan Steiner; *PP* winners Isabelle Touseull and Jakub Moos; and U.S. Army Sgt. Jessica Milewski; second row - Commander William Lamond, Sr. Vice Commander Edwin Quinn, Quartermaster Robert Meckes and Post Surgeon John Croom.



Having served tirelessly for the past 11 years, District 28 Chaplain Charlie Castelluccio was honored with a Certificate of Appreciation by State Commander Thomas Hanzes and District Commander Don Christy. Also pictured is District Adjutant Bob Moser.

Veterans Crisis Line



1-800-273-8255

PRESS 1



West Newton Post 7812 suffered two major floods in 2018, but the Post was determined not to be defeated. On March 23, 2019, the Post held a grand re-opening with officers, members, government officials and community members on hand to celebrate the completion of renovations. Congratulations, Post 7812!



Vandergrift Post 566 rededicates the second floor of its building in honor of deceased U.S. Army SSG Stevon Booker, who was killed in action in Iraq in 2003. His mother, Freddie Jackson, was present for the ceremony. The Pentagon upgraded SSG Booker's medal to the Distinguished Service Cross for his role during the Army's armored convoy attack in Baghdad known as "Thunder Run."

