



# Pennsylvania VFWnews



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

## West Mifflin VFW Members Mark 27 Years Since Desert Storm Service

By Michael P. Mauer

WEST MIFFLIN, PA – The coming months will note a unique anniversary for two life members of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 914 Intrepid West Mifflin. The former warriors are marking 27 years since their service during Operation Desert Storm.

Rami Nassar and Ken Curcio, both of West Mifflin, served in Saudi Arabia during the first Persian Gulf War more than two-and-a-half decades ago. And, although much of the world seemingly remembers the conflict as a sanitized news blip on television, the military experiences of both of these men have impacted them for the rest of their lives.

“I joined the Army on Aug. 2, 1990—the same day that Iraq invaded Kuwait,” said Nassar. “There were not many job opportunities in Pittsburgh in those days, and I did not really have any type of job skills. It was coincidental that I enlisted that day. I didn’t find out that there was trouble in the Middle East until I got home.”

Three weeks after his enlistment, Nassar was sent to initial Army training and then to his permanent unit at Fort Bliss, Texas. Nassar’s group mobilized in January 1991, and deployed seven miles south of Iraq to Logistical Base Charlie near Rafha, Saudi Arabia.



VFW Post 914 Intrepid Life Members Rami Nassar, left, and Ken Curcio both served during Operation Desert Storm.

Located along an important highway known as Tapline Road and near an airport that could handle heavy aircraft, Logistical Base Charlie was set up as staging area to keep large military units supplied with ammunition, food, fuel and water. Nassar and the rest of his fellow soldiers in the 62nd Transportation Company worked there to keep equipment running and supplies

**Gulf War ... continued on Page 5**

## VFW Salutes Gulf War Veterans

**VFW National Headquarters** - On April 11, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. honored the 27th anniversary of the official cease fire of Operation Desert Storm. Our Gulf War veterans are remembered for liberating a country and reigniting America’s pride in its military.

We remember that America was fighting the then-fourth largest standing army in the world, one that was battle-hardened from a nine-year war with Iran, and one that was so brutal that it gassed its citizens.

The fact the war lasted six weeks in the air and 100 hours on the ground is a testament to America’s training and hardware, and of proven military leadership who had honed their teeth in Vietnam — where they learned how not to fight the next war.

The VFW honors all 700,000 American soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen who served in the Gulf, most especially our 374 fallen, 467 wounded and two servicemen who remain missing-in-action. You accomplished your mission.

*The VFW salutes your service. Thank you for continuing your service through the VFW!*

## Department Convention Set for June 13-16, Gettysburg

**Participation Forms Sent to All Posts**

Convention events begin Wednesday, June 13, with registration from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., and the final 2017-18 Council of Administration meeting at 2 p.m. That evening, the joint VFW-Auxiliary Annual Memorial Service will be held starting at 7.

Daily information and award sessions will be held Thursday and Friday. The Patriotic Rally will be held Friday evening. Department elections will be held Saturday morning during the Business Session. The first 2018-19 Council of Administration meeting occurs right after the installment of 2018-19 officers.

Events end Saturday evening, June 16, with a reception for new State Commander Thomas Hanzes and Department Auxiliary President Charlotte Lopes.

There are many family activities available just a few miles from the hotel. The Gettysburg National Military Park is only a few minutes away. Activities include touring the battlefield on horseback, riding a Segway, driving with CD audio narration or by organized bus tours. There are many antique and outlet shopping opportunities in the area.

**CONVENTION FORMS CAN BE FOUND AT [WWW.VFWPAHQ.ORG](http://WWW.VFWPAHQ.ORG) UNDER “EVENTS.”**

## VFW’s Strong Troop Support Rolls On



Above, PAARNG 28th Infantry Division Maj. Gen. Andrew Schafer, Commanding General, inspects the area of operations now being covered by part of the 28th ID’s HHBN, deployed to the Middle East as part of Task Force Spartan. (Photo by Maj. Harry Gobora) The Division’s HHBN is pictured above right before heading overseas.

Prior to the Battalion’s train-up in Texas, Department leaders visited Division Headquarters to pledge the VFW’s support of all deployed PA Guardians. State Commander Dwight Fuhrman presented a “VFW Adopt-a-Unit” certificate to Col. Marc Ferraro and Col. Robert Allison, with State Adjutant John Getz and State Chief of Staff John Brenner also present.

See page 8 for information about the 28th ID’s mission.





## From the State Commander

### VFW Resources Guide Posts to Success

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



To all our Vietnam Veterans in the Veterans of Foreign Wars in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I hope that you observed the 50th Anniversary of the war in one of the many functions held throughout the state. Thank you for your service. **WELCOME HOME!**

I am proud to report that many VFW Posts across our state held or participated in events to recognize and honor Vietnam War veterans. I am also proud to say that my brothers and sisters who served in this war continue our promise that we will never let another generation of returning war veterans to be treated in a manner that does not respect their service. I hope that VFW members from wars after the Vietnam War have felt our support and gratitude when they returned home from overseas deployments.

There are many VFW Posts that have achieved the 100% plus membership goal; congratulations and thank you. There are many Posts that need 10 or less members to be 100%. I hope those Posts will reach into their community to find those members and also to get in touch with members who have left our organization to get them back into the VFW.

I also am aware that some Posts struggle with membership and working their programs. Remember that leadership at Department Headquarters is always available to answer any questions, give suggestions and offer solutions to help you.

Let's continue to work membership so we can finish the year strong. There are resources online ([www.vfw.org/log](http://www.vfw.org/log) in and [www.vfwpahq.org](http://www.vfwpahq.org)) that will help you increase your membership, so please utilize these tools. Membership growth is possible if you commit time to getting to know your comrades in the community and those still in the military.

Unfortunately, there are still Posts out there that really don't care about membership or our programs. This is such a shame, and it is my hope that this changes in the near future.

REMEMBER, if you have a Post canteen, the sign out front says "VFW," not "bar and grill." Those who come in

should know more about how your Post carries out the VFW mission than they do about daily specials in the canteen.

We have had many Posts that have gone non-smoking this year. The feedback we have received is that making the change has actually helped their business instead of hurting it. Give it a try, be patient during the transition and make sure you communicate the fact that you are now a no-smoking facility.

I want to thank our Women Veterans Committee Chairperson Roxann Werner for the invitation to speak during the Women Veterans Retreat in Mechanicsburg. She reports that the group had a very informative and fun weekend. They call themselves "PA's Women Warriors." *You go, girls!*

Thank you to all who have extended their friendship and hospitality to Marsha and me this year. It will be a year that we will never forget and will cherish always. It has been an honor to serve as your Commander this year.



State Commander Dwight Fuhrman and Department Auxiliary President Kelley Lepak congratulate PA VFW Voice of Democracy State Champion Justin Grosvenor for finishing fourth in the National VFW contest.

I hope that you are able to attend our State Convention so that we can finish this year strong. The camaraderie, information and celebration of our award winners are beneficial for all members as we dedicate ourselves to the VFW's future.

Be sure to support our incoming State Commander, Thomas "Ace" Hanzas, for his 2018-2019 term. We all need to work together for our programs and membership in this great Department. **UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL.**

Thank you all for your service and your dedication to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

## General Orders



1. Installing officers are directed to see to it that the Post Election Report forms have been completed and submitted to National Headquarters. 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 send a full roster of newly elected/appointed Officers, including District Commanders, to the Adjutant General immediately after 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 convention will pay a ten dollar (\$10) delegate fee."

Post Quartermasters should register 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.

BY COMMAND OF Dwight R. Fuhrman, State Commander

ATTEST: John B. Getz, Jr., State Adjutant

### Deadlines Coming for Submitting Conv. Resolutions

At VFW State and National Conventions, resolutions are approved to establish goals and policies that govern activities for the following year. Members in good standing may submit resolutions to the Department Convention through their post, county council or district. All proposed By-Law Amendments and Resolutions must be sent to State HQs by **May 31, 2018**.

For more information or guidance on how to submit a proposed By-Law Amendment or Resolution, contact State Adjutant/Quartermaster John Getz at [adjutant@vfwpahq.org](mailto:adjutant@vfwpahq.org) or (717) 234-7927.

## VFW to New VA Sec.: Continue System Progress

*‘We look forward to working with him and his staff to continue building upon the progress created by his predecessors’*

WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is saluting former Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Dr. David Shulkin for his faithful and dedicated service to veterans of all generations.

He came aboard in 2015 as Undersecretary for Health as the VA was still reeling from a nationwide crisis in care and access that had rocked veterans’ confidence. He was retained by President Trump and confirmed as VA Secretary by the Senate 100-0.

Under his tenure, the VA achieved a host of successes ranging from increased accountability and transparency to a beefed-up education package and increases in overall funding and patient satisfaction.

The nominee to become the next VA Secretary, Navy Rear Adm. (Dr.) Ronny Jackson, served in Iraq as an emergency physician in charge of resuscitative medicine for a forward deployed surgical shock trauma platoon, and since 2006, has been the White House physician.

Dr. Jackson’s bio does not reflect any experience working with the VA or with veterans, or managing any organization of size, much less one as multifaceted as the VA, so the VFW will be closely monitoring his confirmation process.

“The VFW does, however, recognize his years of faithful service to nation in uniform, and salutes his willingness to continue serving,” said

VFW National Commander Keith Harman. “We look forward to working with (the VA) to continue building upon the progress created by his predecessors, progress that properly takes care of America’s wounded, ill and injured veterans first.”

### Statement by Acting VA Secretary Robert Wilkie About “Choice Bill”:

“Today marks four years since the disastrous wait-time scandal in Phoenix came to light, where long wait times at the Phoenix VA and other facilities nationwide led to unconscionable delays.

“Following that scandal, Congress passed the bipartisan VA Choice legislation that allowed veterans to seek care in the private sector when faced with VA wait times of over 30 days, or when veterans had to travel more than 40 miles.

“Funding for the Choice program was set to expire last year, but Congress extended it twice while it worked on a bipartisan deal for the next generation of Choice legislation that would give even better options for veterans to seek care in the community when the VA was unable to provide them the best standard of treatment.

“It’s time to fix the Choice Program – as well as the department’s other non-VA care efforts—once and for all by merging them into a single, streamlined community care program that’s easy to use.”



**Veterans Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

**STAND BY THEM**

Confidential help for Veterans and their families

• • Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to 838255 • • •

## 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.**

**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” section to read about the State Service Officer program.

Veterans can also contact VFW State HQ at (717) 234-7927 to learn about the VFW Post Service Officer Training Program, which helps members study for and become Post Service Officers.



**State Service Officer John Foster explains VA benefits to a veteran during the Great Outdoor Show.**

## Veterans Claims and Benefit Information

*This information is provided by the Department’s Veterans Service Officer program. State HQs thanks the State of Pennsylvania for Act 66 grant funds.*

### MILITARY BURN PITS CAUSES LUNG DISEASE IN TROOPS

A judge under the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office for Workers’ Compensation Programs decreed last month that open-air burn pits—where thousands of chemicals were released into the air after trash and other waste were incinerated at American military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan—are connected to lung disease.

### RESEARCH LINKS IRAQ DUST TO ILL SOLDIERS

*Published by Kelly Kennedy, USA TODAY; to read the full article visit [www.usatoday.com](http://www.usatoday.com) and search using the headline above.*

Titanium and other metals found in dust at a base in Iraq have been linked to the dust found in six sick soldiers’ lungs, according to a study.

“We biopsied several patients and found titanium in every one of them,” said Anthony Szema, assistant professor at Stony Brook School of Medicine, who specializes in pulmonology and allergies. “It matched dust that we have collected from Camp Victory in Iraq.”

The dust is different from dust found elsewhere in that human lungs are unable to dispel it through natural processes. The Iraq dust attaches to iron and copper, and forms polarizable crystals in the lungs, Szema said. The particles—1/30th the size of a human hair—have sharp edges.

All of the veterans came in for help because they were short of breath, said Szema, who also heads the allergy clinic at the VAMC in Northport, N.Y. Dozens have been diagnosed with constrictive bronchiolitis, a narrowing of the lung’s smallest passageways that occurs only after exposure to an environmental toxin or in lung-transplant patients.

The condition may have been created from burn pit debris emissions from styrofoam to vehicles to computers to ordinance in Iraq and Afghanistan.

At Balad Air Base (Iraq), workers burned 240 tons of trash daily in an open pit one mile from sleeping quarters. It may be naturally occurring. Or, it may have been produced in the 1991 Persian Gulf War when Iraqi missiles and U.S. bombs melded dust to metal.

Szema’s research shows that 14% of veterans who deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan had new-onset respiratory problems.

Vanderbilt Univ. Medical Center pulmonologist Bob Miller diagnosed chronic bronchiolitis in 50 101st Airborne soldiers using biopsies to make the diagnosis since the disease is hard to spot using other imaging technology.

### HERBICIDE EXPOSURE-RELATED CLAIMS INCLUDE SERVICE IN THAILAND

After reviewing documents related to herbicide use in Vietnam and Thailand, Compensation and Pension Services has determined that there was significant use of herbicides on the fenced in perimeters of military bases in Thailand intended to eliminate vegetation and ground cover.

Evidence of this can be found in a declassified Vietnam-era DoD study titled *Project CHECO Southeast Asia: Base Defense in Thailand*.

Therefore, when herbicide related claims from veterans are received, the Service Officer should encourage the veteran to obtain treatment and personnel records to determine whether the veteran’s service activities involved duty (security police/patrol dog handler, security police squadron) on or near the perimeter of the base.

Performance evaluations and lay statements can be used as credible evidence. This allows for presumptive service connection of the diseases associated with herbicide exposure.

The majority of troops in Thailand during the Vietnam era were stationed at the Royal Thai Air Force Bases. Army troops had small MP installations established in Thailand during this period. The Army veteran must prove that their service was for security purposes and not criminal investigation.

### HERBICIDES USED IN KOREA

Currently, tactical herbicide exposure can be presumed for Veterans who served in specific Army units along the Korean demilitarized zone from April 1968 to July 1969. These units were identified by DoD documents.

When service treatment or records show that a veteran served in one of these units during the time frame of tactical herbicide use, the veteran qualifies for the presumption of exposure.

### DELIVERY OF SPECIALTY REHAB. & PROSTHETIC SERVICES

The VA recently implemented a rapid response team to expand staffing and training, increase communication directly with veterans and improve processes to reduce and eliminate the backlog of pending requests for prosthetic items and services.

Enrolled VA patients can now schedule appointments directly with amputation care and wheelchair clinics, without seeing a primary care provider. This means veterans will not have to make an extra appointment and travel to a VA facility for a referral.



# WATCHING YOUR BACK: MEMBERSHIP PROTECTS YOUR INTERESTS



## VFW's Legislative Priorities Represent the Needs of All Veterans



Photo by VFW National HQs

**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 Keith Harman (above)—to protect the interests of veterans, our military troops and their families.**

**Budget** - To fully fund VA and DOD programs and services, Congress must: • End budget sequestration and adjust outdated budget caps. • Authorize VA to receive reimbursements from TRICARE and Medicare. • Never reduce one veteran's benefits to pay for another. • Ensure the POW/MIA Accounting mission is fully funded.

**Work Force Development and Accountability** - To attract and maintain a quality workforce, Congress and VA must: • Improve hiring authorities to recruit and retain a high quality workforce. • Provide quality training programs for employees and managers. • Quickly investigate, discipline and remove employees who underperform or endanger veterans' lives.

**Health Care** - To ensure that veterans receive timely access to high quality, comprehensive, and veteran-centric care at no added cost to veterans, Congress,

VA and DOD must: • Consolidate VA's community care programs into a single, integrated system. • Modernize VA's health IT systems. • Expand current caregiver benefits to veterans of all eras. • Strengthen VA and DOD health care and research for mental health and traumatic brain injuries (TBI). • Further expand gender-specific programs and competencies. • Provide care and benefits to veterans and family members impacted by toxic exposures. • Prevent the increase of pharmaceutical copayments. • Conduct medical research on the benefits of medical cannabis. • Extend telehealth services. • Make nursing home eligibility part of the VA health care benefits package.

**Compensation and Benefits** - To ensure veterans and their dependents have timely access to earned benefits, Congress and VA must: • Require treatment of presumptive conditions as a claim for disability compensation. • Establish presumptive service connection for hearing loss, tinnitus, TBI, and exposure to certain toxic substances. • Increase burial allowances to account for inflation and include spouses' information on all headstones. • Reform the Gulf War Illness Disability Benefits Questionnaire. • Address veterans' homelessness by increasing the availability of affordable housing. • Adjust Grant and Per Diem Program rates for inflation. • Prohibit VA compensation and non-service-connected pension from being considered countable income for homeless programs.

**Education, Employment and Transition Assistance** - To ensure veterans have an opportunity to obtain meaningful employment after leaving military service, they must have access to: • High quality and sustainable



**Congressman Dwight Evans meets with PA Department visitors State Commander Dwight Fuhrman and wife Marsha; National Council Member Robert Eiler and wife Tracy, and State VFW Legislative Committee member Joseph Benacci and wife Sandra.**

education benefits. • Strong employment and training programs. • Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment services throughout their lifetime. • Small business development opportunities. • Civilian credentials or academic credit for the professional training they receive during military service. • Government hiring and contracting opportunities. • A national veterans treatment court advocate within VA. • Education and training in new and expanding career fields. • Proper knowledge and training in transition programs.

### Defense/Homeland Security

- 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 the Department of Homeland Security must: • 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.

**Military Quality of Life** - To maintain a quality and comprehensive benefits and retirement package that is the backbone for an all-volunteer force, Congress and DOD must: • Preserve the integrity of TRICARE. • Protect and improve on-base quality of life programs. • Pass full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation. • Eliminate the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset for surviving military retiree spouses.

**POW/MIA** - To make POW/MIA recovery a national priority, Congress and DOD 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.

## VFW Legislative Victories

**While its legislative victories for veterans started in 1917, the VFW's achievements just over the last 25 years alone have drastically improved the lives of veterans of all ages:**

**"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: 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, 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, 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; 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 copayment increases



Department leadership had a strong presence in Washington, D.C., during the National VFW Legislative Conference in March. Shown are (from left) National Council Member Robert Eiler, State Commander Dwight Fuhrman, Jr. Vice Commander Wayne Perry, Sr. Vice Commander Thomas Hanzes, State Adjutant John Getz and Legislative Committee members Joseph Benacci and Nelson Lowes (Chairman). Activities included meeting with U.S. Senator Robert Casey, shown at right with Lowes and Hanzes.



**Gulf War ... continued from Page 1**

moving in harsh desert conditions. They also guarded the vital base from Iraqi incursions.

On Jan. 17, 1991—two days after the United Nations mandated deadline for the Iraqi army to withdraw from Kuwait—Coalition forces began an intensive air campaign against Saddam Hussein’s half million man army. Ground operations started Feb. 24 and ran through Feb. 27.

Nassar said he remembers this time as a blur. “I was the new guy,” said Nassar. “This was the first thing I did with the Army, so it was all new to me.”

During Desert Storm, Logistical Base Charlie received rocket and artillery fire from the Iraqi army, though none of it hit near Nassar.

For his actions during Desert Storm, Nassar was awarded the Army Achievement Medal and the Southwest Asia Service Medal. After the cease fire ended hostilities Feb. 28, 1991, Nassar spent another three months in Saudi Arabia before his unit rotated back to the United States. He stayed in the Army about six more years before coming back to the Mon Valley to return to school and start a family.

After leaving the military in 1997, Nassar earned a bachelor’s degree from Point Park University, and a master’s degree from California University of Pennsylvania. He credits the Army for giving him the discipline to make this possible.

“I am really glad I went into the Army when I did,” said Nassar. “It straightened me out when I was headed down the wrong road.”

Nearly 500 miles east of Logistical Base Charlie in January 1991, Marine Lance Cpl. Curcio was landing in the Saudi Arabian port city of Jubail. His reserve military police unit from Pittsburgh was attached to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, and tasked to provide port and airport security at Ras al Mishab—30 miles southeast of Kuwait—and around Jubail.

**Desert Shield/Storm Casualties:**

- **Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide): 2,322,000**
- **Deployed to Gulf: 694,550**
- **Battle Deaths: 148**
- **Other Deaths (In Theater): 235**
- **Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater): 1,565**
- **Non-mortal Woundings: 467**
- **Living Veterans: 2,244,583**

VA Statistics, May 2017

Once the air campaign began Jan, 17, 1991, Curcio and his fellow Marines came under fire several times from Iraqi short-range Frog 7 missiles. Following ground war operations that began with Iraqi armored columns briefly capturing the nearby Saudi Arabian port city of Khafji, Curcio’s unit helped process the increasing numbers of surrendering Iraqis.

According to Curcio, more than 20,000 prisoners were handled by his unit at Kabrit, Saudi Arabia. These duties kept the Marines occupied throughout most of the land war and after the cease fire. Later at Mishab when Curcio was standing guard March 21st, he saw

one of the more tragic events of his deployment.

While attempting to land through a cloud of thick, black smoke caused by the hundreds of oil wells burning in Kuwait, a military transport carrying nearly 100 Senegalese soldiers and its Saudi Arabian crew crashed. Curcio was one of the first at the site, and helped get medical and other emergency personnel to the scene.

Curcio said the carnage caused by the crash was the worst thing he’d witnessed during the war. Of the six Coalition troops his unit helped pull alive from the aircraft’s wreckage, only three eventually survived.

**Building the National Desert Storm War Memorial starts with you! Working together, we can honor the lives of those who were lost during Operation Desert Storm and Operation Desert Shield. Visit <http://www.ndswm.org/donate>**



As action in the Persian Gulf wound down, Curcio’s unit was assigned to military customs duty in Jubail. The Marines rotated back to Pittsburgh in May 1991.

Curcio fondly remembers when he came home. “I am most proud of when I saw Vietnam vets carrying signs and thanking us,” the Marine said. “I’ll never forget it. It was a place of honor to help those vets with our victory.”

Among the awards Curcio earned for his service are the Navy Unit Commendation, the Meritorious Navy Unit Commendation and the Southwest Asia Service Medal. Like Nassar, he settled down in West Mifflin and started raising a family. He currently works as a fiber optic technician for a local broadcasting company.

Through their memberships in the VFW and other veterans organizations, both Curcio and Nassar volunteer their time in assisting fellow veterans from all conflicts to readjust to civilian life.

“I have great pride in my service and have no regrets,” said Curcio. “I do wish—as many do—that we would have finished Saddam at the time when we had the power to do it so others wouldn’t have to die later over it.”

Nassar agrees with Curcio that Desert Storm’s objectives should have included a regime change in Iraq.

“I am also glad that I did my time in the 90s, and got out,” the former soldier said of his service. “I did not have to go through the current wars and everything that Iraq and Afghan vets have to deal with.”

*(Michael P. Mauer served as an Army photojournalist during Operation Desert Storm. He was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal by Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf for his actions during the war. Mike is a life member of VFW Post 914.)*

**District Meeting Schedule**

DIST. #	Place of Meeting	Date	Time
1	Cpl. Michael J. Crescenz – Phila.	May 9, 2018	7:30 P.M.
8	VFW Post #1597 – Croydon	May 20, 2018	1:30 P.M.
9	VFW Post #106 – West Chester	May 6, 2018	1:00 P.M.
10	VFW Post #7251 – Throop	May 20, 2018	2:00 P.M.
11	VFW Post #821 – Berwick	May 20, 2018	2:30 P.M.
12	VFW Post #3432 – Pine Grove	May 20, 2018	2:30 P.M.
13	VFW Post #6558 – Womelsdorf	May 20, 2018	2:00 P.M.
14	VFW Post #5642 – Montrose	May 20, 2018	2:00 P.M.
15	VFW Post #1630 – Lock Haven	May 20, 2018	2:00 P.M.
16	VFW Post #7155 – Trappe	May 16, 2018	7:30 P.M.
17	VFW Post #1754 – Huntingdon	May 6, 2018	2:00 P.M.
18	VFW Post #7530 – Mechanicsburg	May 6, 2018	1:00 P.M.
19	VFW Post #212 – Bradford	May 20, 2018	2:30 P.M.
20	VFW Post #8008 – Nesquehoning	May 20, 2018	2:00 P.M.
21	VFW Post #1599 – Chambersburg	May 20, 2018	2:00 P.M.
22	VFW Post #1785 – Clearfield	May 20, 2018	2:30 P.M.
23	VFW Post #7565 – Hooversville	May 20, 2018	2:00 P.M.
24	VFW Post #8308 – Lawrence	May 20, 2018	2:00 P.M.
25	VFW Post #128 – Rochester	May 6, 2018	2:00 P.M.
26	VFW Post #4963 - Ebensburg	May 20, 2018	2:30 P.M.
27	VFW Post #92 – Lower Burrell	May 6, 2018	2:30 P.M.
28	VFW Post #6166 – Hermitage	May 6, 2018	2:00 P.M.
29	VFW Post #5008 – East Pittsburgh	May 20, 2018	2:00 P.M.

**ALL POSTS MUST BE REPRESENTED AT DISTRICT MEETINGS.**

Focus on Mission Success



State Commander Dwight Fuhrman and his wife Marsha were joined by PA Department Past State Commanders, officers, Auxiliary leaders and their spouses at the PAARNG 28th Infantry Division's recent Annual Dining Out to show the VFW's ongoing support of all PA Guardians.



Breinigsville Post 8282 Commander William Richards watches as Bonnie Reppert presents Upper Macungie Community Service Police Officer Bill Rohrbach with \$2,000 for fingerprinting and DNA testing of children. Also shown are Past Post Commander Clark Hamm and Quartermaster Jim McGinnes. In the past two years, VFW Post 8282 has donated more than \$34,000 for public safety and many other local projects. (Parkland Press photo)



Hershey Post 3502 donates \$1,000 to the Derry Township Police Department for use in obtaining riot gear and supporting a K-9 unit. Pictured are (from left) Post Commander Scott Fritz, Derry Chief of Police Garth Warner and Post Quartermaster David Gyger.



North Union Post 8543 continues to hold Pearl Harbor Programs on December 7th at their Post Home. Placing the wreath is Auxiliary President Beverly Paull and Quartermaster Ralph Delsordo. Pictured are (from left) Paull, WWII Veteran Past VFW State Commander Allen Q. Jones and Delsordo.



Connellsville VFW Post 21 recently honored winners of its *Voice of Democracy* and *Patriot's Pen* contests and each student received a certificate and monetary gift from Post 21 and Auxiliary. Pictured are: (from left, seated) Teran Kemp (PP first place), Kirra Davis (PP second), Megan Anderson (PP third), Post Auxiliary President Nancy Jones; (standing) Post Commander Glenn Siple, Steven Fabian (VOD first place), Nathaniel Neiderheiser (VOD second), Michael Bower (VOD third) and District 23 Commander Thomas McFadden.



District 29 Commander William Roland and District Adjutant Mike Bookster attended the opening of a Burger King in Pittsburgh. During the event, Burger King representative Matt Carpenter donated \$500 to the VFW's Unmet Needs program, which provides emergency grants to military families.



Eddystone Post 7949 Commander Bill Daws presents a donation to Girl Scout Troop 51129 for their Cookies for the Troops program. Shown are Shana Brennan and Jocelyn Brennan accepting the funds. For the past seven years, Troop 51129 has sent an average of 1,000-1,200 boxes of cookies to deployed troops.



The Clarks Summit Post 7069 Auxiliary presented the Post with a donation from money raised during a chicken barbecue. The funds will be used for the Post's scholarship program. Pictured are (from left) Post Commander Donald Jones, Auxiliary President Paula Thompson, Auxiliary Sr. Vice President Wendy Mangan and Post Quartermaster/Adjutant Michael G. McLane.



Billy Simpson VFW Post 470 recently held a Spaghetti Dinner with all the proceeds going to the Erie Soldiers & Sailors Home. Ken Vybril, from the Erie Soldiers & Sailors Home, accepts a check for \$3,000 from Post Quartermaster Joe Benacci.

Focus on Mission Success



King of Prussia Post 7878 members gather for a photo during a break in activities that were held during the Veterans Day weekend.



Selinsgrove Post 6631 and its Auxiliary raised \$6,032 through a chicken and waffle dinner to benefit Ben Kaiser, a local man stricken by a severe stroke. The Post raises funds through a variety of activities and donates many thousands of dollars to programs that benefit veterans, less fortunate persons and the community in general.



East Berlin VFW Post 8896 recently presented awards to its *Voice of Democracy* Teacher of the Year Melissa Ann Pero, *VOD* student winner Paige Erdman and *Patriot's Pen* student Isabella Bobe. All VFW Posts are encouraged to participate in these competitions.



Sixty-six female veterans participated in the Department's Annual Women Veterans Retreat held March 23-25. State Commander Dwight Fuhrman thanked the women for their service in the military and encouraged them to become involved in the VFW. See page 10 for more information.

Honor Our Troops By Celebrating Armed Forces Day on May 19th



Bangor VFW Post 739 maintains a strong community presence by participating in numerous local events, including this bridge dedication ceremony. Shown is VFW member and guest speaker Donald Jones. Also shown is Post Commander Nick Alfero, Post Quartermaster Bob Washock and Gene Trigiani. All Posts are encouraged to contact their local government office to offer their service of providing Color Guard and Honor Guard units. (Blue Valley Times photos)





## Good is Ok, But Giving Your Best is Better

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



Comrades:  
*"Good, better, best. Never let it rest. 'Til your good is better and your better is best."*—St. Jerome

As the end of another VFW year fast approaches, we must continue to work—giving our absolute best—to help our Posts achieve their goals and complete their programs. We want to exceed all of Commander Dwight Fuhrman's expectations!

Much of our success depends on our membership; and also how the general public perceives us, our organization and our Posts. Recruiting one member is good, but gaining a few more would be great.

Being a Vietnam Veteran, I have been reflecting on Vietnam War Veterans Day (March 29th), especially the 58,000 plus who perished in the war. I solemnly think about their loved ones and friends that they left behind. I am certain the pain of their loss never really goes away. I will forever honor their memory.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the State Convention in Gettysburg. Posts, please participate in this event by sending a few representatives.

Always remember, the PA VFW belongs to you. It is a strong Department because of its Posts and members. We all learn a great deal by attending the convention because this event gives us the opportunity for our voices to be heard. The socialization with fellow comrades is an immeasurable benefit to everyone! And, like anything in life, you get out of it what you put into it!

Blessings to all my fellow veterans and our troops all over the world. Sadly, much of society has become complacent and takes for granted the sacrifices of our veterans, our troops and their families.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the VFW. Without you, I would not have this great opportunity to serve as your Sr. Vice Commander. Please give your best ideas, all your energy and your total support to our mission.

Thank you to Commander Dwight for a great job. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve under your leadership.

## OTIs Prepare Post Officers for Sound Leadership

The Department has scheduled free summer Officer Training events to help Post Officers understand and fulfill their duties. These sessions are of great importance to both new and experienced Post officers. The format will be a combination of brief presentations, breakouts and question-and-answer periods. Even if you have attended one of these sessions before, you will benefit from the updates, rules changes and new discussion opportunities.

Each Post is encouraged to send several officers to create teamwork. State HQs will mail details to Post Commanders. Dress is casual with VFW Cap. All sessions begin at 9 a.m. (coffee/donuts at 8 a.m.; lunch at noon) except as otherwise noted.

**SOUTHWESTERN PA OTI** – August 4th, VFW Post 7505, Mars

**NORTHWESTERN PA OTI** – August 5th, VFW Post 2006, Meadville

**SOUTHCENTRAL PA** – "Flying Squadron" August 10th-11th, Radisson, Camp Hill  
**Required for State VFW Officers and Program Leaders - By Invitation Only**

**SOUTHCENTRAL PA OTI** – August 12th, Radisson Hotel, Camp Hill

**NORTHCENTRAL PA OTI** – August 13th, VFW Post 1754, Huntingdon - 6 p.m.

**NORTHEASTERN PA OTI** – August 18th, VFW Post 5544, Jessup

**SOUTHEASTERN PA OTI** – August 19th, VFW Post 2819, Philadelphia

Incoming State Commander Thomas Hanzes encourages all Posts to participate in one of these sessions. **Pre-registration is encouraged and can be done using the form that will be mailed to all Posts** and is accessible at [www.vfwpahq.org](http://www.vfwpahq.org), under the "Events" page. For more information, call State HQ at (717) 234-7927.

## Donations Sought to Support Arthritis & Diabetes Programs

Every year, VFW Posts donate funds to support the Department's Arthritis and Diabetes Programs, which generate research and patient service funds for veterans who are disabled by these diseases. Posts that donate to the Arthritis Campaign before May 31st will receive one entry into a drawing for two life memberships for every \$25 donated.

All checks should be made out to "Department of PA VFW Arthritis Fund" and mailed to PA VFW State Headquarters, 4002 Fenton Ave., Harrisburg PA 17109-5943.

Post can also make donations to the Department's Diabetes Program by sending funds to State HQ earmarked "Department of PA VFW Diabetes Fund".

## VFW Posts Encouraged to Send Care Packages

### PA's 28th ID Takes over Task Force Spartan

By Sgt. 1st Class Doug Roles - 28 ID Public Affairs

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait – The 28th Infantry Division's headquarters and headquarters battalion—based in Harrisburg, PA—assumed responsibility of Task Force Spartan from the 35th Infantry Division during a recent transfer of authority ceremony held at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. The 28th ID is serving as a division headquarters for roughly 10,000 soldiers conducting theater security operations in the Middle East.

The 28th is the largest unit of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard.

"Once again the 28th has deployed overseas in support of our country. This time in support of Operation Spartan Shield in southwest Asia," said Maj. Gen. Andrew Schafer, the 28th's commanding general. "We will work with and conduct training with our allies in the region and maintain readiness for assigned U.S. Army units. We will support ARCENT (U.S. Army Central) and CENTCOM (U.S. Central Command) as we continue to improve our theater posture."

Now in its sixth year, Task Force Spartan is designed to maintain a U.S. military posture sufficient to strengthen U.S. defense relationships, build partner capacity and execute CENTCOM contingency plans when necessary. Lt. Gen. Michael Garrett, U.S. Army Central Commander, said the division headquarters at the helm of Task Force Spartan plays an important role in the security of a dynamic region.

Task Force Spartan is a multi-component organization made up of active Army and National Guard units and rounded out by Army Reserve units. Garrett said Task Force Spartan epitomizes a total Army effort and "serves as proof positive that without the reserve components in our force structure, we would long ago have failed as an Army."

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Here are APO addresses that VFW Posts can use to send care packages to 28th ID soldiers (please advise Public Affairs Director David Sandman if you plan to send a large shipment of boxes at one time). Sandman can provide Posts with a list of items requested by these soldiers.

- ADFOR-J/KASOTC - PA Guard Personnel - APO, AE 09315, and
- CAMP ARIFJAN - 28TH ID HSC - APO, AE 09306.



Maj. Gen. Andrew Schafer (left), 28th ID commanding general, and Command Sgt. Maj. John Jones unfurl the division colors during the ceremony. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Roles)



## Communicate Better and Make Simple Changes

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



Comrades, as this year is coming to an end, we have to ask some important questions, both from a collective Post perspective and as individual members, one of which is, "Did we do everything possible to increase our membership?"

Here are two more key questions: "Have we made our Post and canteens family friendly" and "Have we shared critical mission information so people have a greater respect for the VFW?"

There are so many ways to get new members: have an open house; sponsor a veterans' benefit information fair; host a veterans' appreciation event or current service members with a military appreciation event.

Go to a mall in your area and ask to set up a monthly information booth where you can share information about the VFW and veteran benefits. You can also pass

out Poppies and explain why the VFW continues to support this program.

Use newspaper ads to promote these events and the fact that your Post has made changes to be more family friendly.

If you haven't done so already, there are many ways to make your Post more welcoming to families. Make Wi-Fi available; modernize your restrooms by adding a baby changing station; replace worn ceiling tiles; repaint the walls; add more lighting and remodel the exterior.

Many Posts have become no-smoking facilities to make visiting the VFW a more pleasant, healthy experience for families. State HQ can provide many examples of Posts that have transitioned to being smoke-free facilities.

Comrades, change doesn't happen by itself. We must change how we recruit new members, how we promote our services and benefits, and modernize our facilities to attract future VFW leaders.

Let's get out there to meet veterans where they are and improve our Posts.





## Membership Moment

# Do You Care About Your Comrades and the VFW's Mission?

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



Why should you care if the VFW's membership continues to decline? Why should you go out and recruit a new member? Why should you renew your membership?

Good questions that deserve important answers.

If you want to continue to have access to the VFW's free benefits assistance provided by our Service Officers, you should care about halting the VFW's membership downward trend.

If you want to continue to enjoy the camaraderie, patriotic events and service opportunities made possible by the VFW, you should recruit at least one more member to strengthen our foundation.

If you want the peace of mind

that comes with knowing that the best veterans' advocacy team—our VFW staff in Washington, D.C.—protects your benefits and other interests while you sleep and work, we need your membership support to carry out this critical service to war zone veterans.

If you utilize VFW consumer discounts and take pride in our community activities, our support of the military and how we assist veterans in need, you should renew your membership so we can continue our mission.

Whether you visit your Post canteen for food and beverages and like being with other veterans, or you never enter a post building, the VFW makes life better for veterans from all service eras.

With your help, we can keep the VFW as one of the best service organizations in America. Without your support, membership will drop to a point

when only a limited number of regional VFW Posts will remain and our advocacy becomes less influential.

More than ever, the VFW needs your energy, ideas and recruiting help. I am optimistic that all members—including you—will take this message seriously enough to increase your involvement.

We rallied together to fight enemies of freedom and preserve peace across the world. We served with honor and gave our all to keep America the best nation in the world. Now, I respectfully ask all members to join together in another fight: grow our PA VFW so we can continue to meet our mission serving veterans, our military and communities.

I am proud of the work my comrades do in the VFW. Like I did with my military buddies, I stand strong with my VFW family to be a positive factor in this nation. Will you serve along side us?

## Facts and Figures

### Post Audits, Relief Funds & Membership Retention

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



I am so proud of the great work that you and your Post does every day to drive the Veterans of Foreign Wars mission forward. Staying true to our

motto "*No One Does More for Veterans,*" requires many volunteer hours of service, and we could not do it without terrific support from our Posts.

The 2017-18 VFW program year has been challenging, but we continue to make life better for veterans, those defending freedom and our neighbors.

At the State HQ level, we are receiving better quarterly Post Trustee Audit Forms. However, we still have some improper ones being submitted, including those with the Post Relief Funds line incorrect or blank. This line must show all donations from Poppy donations for helping needy veterans.

I know that the funds are usually kept in the General Fund, but Poppy money and donations must be broken out and subtracted from the General Fund by reporting it as Post Relief funds and used only for that purpose.

Section 219 of the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure clearly states the purpose of a Post Relief Fund. Section 704 also covers this issue. Your VFW Post exists, first and foremost, to help veterans, so funds raised for this purpose must be dedicated to assisting those comrades who are facing hard times. You can even use these funds to pay membership dues for members unable to afford paying their dues.

Another common problem area involves the Post Dues Reserve Fund. From July 1 through June 30th, Post Quartermasters must put one half of the dues money received into this Fund. This is clearly defined in Section 717 of the Manual of Procedure.

Please follow the instructions for all areas on the Audit Form. Otherwise, your Post will be considered late in submitting this critical form. When Post trustees sign the form, they attest to the form being accurate, audited and complete. Please take this responsibility very seriously.

Remember, if you follow the By-Laws, you cannot go wrong.

Please do your part to keep your Post membership strong. Post retention of members is very essential for a strong VFW. Do not let social members in your canteen drive your membership away.

If State HQ can help you in any way, please call (717) 234-7927.



## Chaplains: Be Prepared to Pray in a Reverent, Meaningful Manner

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



As a VFW Chaplain, one of the main things you will be asked to do at many of the functions you attend, is to offer a prayer. This will happen within the

VFW and also at functions you attend outside of the VFW community. On some occasions, you will be asked ahead of time, and at other times, it will be a last-minute request. This is normal once people know that you are the chaplain.

Leading in prayer involves standing before others and addressing God on their behalf. Prayer should be done with reverence, some measure of confidence and with a degree of feeling. This is true for the VFW ritual prayers and also for the spontaneous prayers.

Here are a few things I have found to be helpful:

**1. Expect to be asked, so don't be surprised. Be ready!** What happens if you attend a community Memorial Day service and the local pastor, who was scheduled to give the invocation, is not present for some reason? Those in charge may turn to you and ask if you would provide the invocation. So, anticipate that something unexpected will happen sometime, and be prepared for it. This happened to me recently at a community dinner for senior citizens. The local pastor did not show, and as the program was about to start, the person in charge

began to panic. Someone spotted me, and asked me to provide the invocation.

**2. Speak naturally and clearly.** Remember, it is your responsibility to be heard and understood.

**3. Enunciate. Don't read or speak in a garbled or low-toned voice.** Droning or speaking in a monotone voice, sends a signal to the brain of the listener that this is not important or meaningful.

**Leading in prayer involves standing before others and addressing God on their behalf. Prayer should be done with reverence, some measure of confidence and with a degree of feeling.**

**4. Be sincere and speak slower than normal.** When a Chaplain reads a prayer or offers a spontaneous prayer publicly, it should not only be his/her personal prayer, but it is a collective prayer offered to God on behalf of everyone present. In essence, "our" collective prayer offered by one person, and if done well, everyone will mentally participate in the prayer. When a person reads a book, the author attempts to get into the head of the reader. And, when a Chaplain offers a prayer, he/she should do it in a way that persons listening mentally follow along.

**5. Don't preach, evangelize or be intentionally offensive.** Unfortunately, there are examples of lengthy, controversial and offensive prayers offered at State Capitols by "guest

chaplains." One of the most famous ones occurred in Wichita, KS by Pastor Joe Wright [http://www.eaec.org/desk/joe\\_wright\\_prayer.htm](http://www.eaec.org/desk/joe_wright_prayer.htm). Also: <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/prayer-for-our-nation>.

In keeping with the previous advice in #5, be careful about referring to specific deities. Included in the March/April 2018 Pennsylvania General Orders was the following statement: *Dept. of PA, VFW, reminds all duly elected Chaplains at all levels within this Dept. to adhere to those references to a supreme being as set forth in the VFW Ritual during all official functions of this organization, not to interject reference to any specific deity or deification during same (March/April 2018 Pennsylvania VFW News, General Orders #15, p. 5).*

This is a difficult adjustment, especially for some conservative Protestants, whose faith, tradition and culture teaches otherwise. I found the following article quite insightful and helpful when offering prayers at civic gatherings: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/markdroberts/series/praying-in-the-name-of-jesus>.

The bottom line is to be sensitive and respect others who may not share your beliefs or passion.

We should always strive to conduct ourselves in a way that does not denigrate or demean other faith traditions or offend those who have no religious faith.

Blessings as you serve. See my *Chaplain's Page* at [www.vfwpahq.org](http://www.vfwpahq.org).



## Women Veterans Committee

### Retreat Experience was Enjoyed by Everyone

Roxanne Werner, Chairperson - rox\_usn\_07@hotmail.com



Sixty-six sisters-in-arms came together in March for the annual VFW Women Veterans Retreat. The retreat was held in Mechanicsburg and Women Veterans came from all parts of the state and the Northeast U.S., traveling from as far away as Erie, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Massachusetts.

The retreat was an opportunity for women veterans of all services and eras to gather in camaraderie to honor the dedication and sacrifices of all women who served and are serving today.

The weekend focused on services and opportunities available to women veterans. The

main focus areas addressed were: Service Officer support, Military Sexual Trauma counseling, Vet Center services, Women In Military Service for America Memorial in Washington, Women Veteran PA license plate legislation, National VFW Women Veteran issues and concerns, and the beloved service dog organization DOG T.A.G.S. (Train Assist Guide Serve).

An inspirational, interactive exercise and discussion was facilitated by Dave Ragan of Veteran's Promise, a veteran-owned organization that assists and advocates for veterans and their families.

Following an afternoon of patriotic painting, the weekend culminated in a



dinner with Department Commander Dwight Fuhrman, who was slightly outnumbered by all the women veterans in attendance. The dinner was hosted by Commander Scott Henry of the Lower Allen VFW Post 7530. The esprit-de-corps and support for all veterans was very evident and appreciated throughout the entire weekend.

The camaraderie was particularly evident by how everyone was drawn to two

special attendees, Petty Officer Second Class Ila Mae Cole (Age 93) and Sergeant Beverly Kreger (Age 96), both WWII Veterans. When asked to recall her fondest memory of her military service, Ila Mae commented that she "liked everything." Beverly was a telephone operator at

Postal service stations throughout Europe and was proud to have "helped the boys get their mail."

These amazing women have seen and experienced many things throughout their lives and blessed the retreat with their quiet grace.

Thanks to all the individuals, Posts and Districts that supported the retreat with \$15,000 of donations. Your generosity allowed us to treat the women veterans to a fantastic weekend.

Respect-Reflect-Recognize; I am a Veteran and member of the VFW!

See page 7 for a photo of all women veterans who attended the retreat.

## State PA VFW Golf Tourney Set for June 4-10

Indiana VFW Post 1989 of Indiana invites all VFW members to the participate in the 63rd Annual State VFW Golf Tournament. The event, to be held at Indian Springs Golf & Country Club in Indiana, is also open to all military veterans with proper identification.

**Details:** Practice rounds June 4-7; Tournament days June 8-10; Eight flight championships; \$120 entry fee includes practice rounds, tournament rounds, carts for three rounds, lunch for three rounds, two continental breakfasts at the pro shop, gifts, skill prizes, trophies and cash prizes for the top two winners in each flight.

Applications must be received by May 15. Contact Wes Skibo at (724) 840-1269.

## 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. The PA VFW salutes them all and we support their families.



## Department Membership Update: 94.02% of the 2016-17 Year-End Total

Top five posts ranked by Membership Division			
Div.	Post	Location	%
1	5958	TITUSVILLE	102.83%
1	1599	CHAMBERSBURG	92.65%
1	8951	WEST YORK	72.08%
1	7043	COALPORT	44.63%
2	8896	EAST BERLIN	102.69%
2	1446	RED LION	102.39%
2	845	DOWNINGTOWN	101.06%
2	2385	GRATZ	100.78%
2	740	EDINBORO-MCKEAN	100.00%
3	7505	MARS	115.63%
3	5265	SPRING GROVE	106.76%
3	1600	BELLEFONTE	102.19%
3	7155	TRAPPE	100.75%
3	1785	CLEARFIELD	100.40%
4	7012	NEW FREEDOM	106.34%
4	6759	REINHOLDS	101.24%
4	411	BIRDSBORO	100.95%
4	6076	MYERSTOWN	99.51%
4	1718	HARRISBURG	98.71%
5	821	BERWICK	106.29%
5	148	HARRISBURG	105.16%
5	8488	KINGSLEY	102.84%
5	5642	MONTROSE	102.43%
5	4795	WINDBER	102.27%
6	882	MARYSVILLE	117.69%
6	7073	PARKER	109.40%
6	6417	PALMYRA	106.03%
6	8826	SALISBURY	104.83%
6	3502	HERSHEY	102.94%
7	6824	ROME	114.56%
7	8008	NESQUEHONING	108.82%
7	6555	SAGAMORE	107.86%
7	384	NEW ALBANY	101.94%
7	5424	JAMESTOWN	101.92%
8	7919	MONTGOMERY COUNTY	113.92%
8	8269	HOWARD	106.94%
8	3258	CHALFONT	104.70%
8	7219	FAIRCHANCE	103.75%
8	7605	TWIN ROCKS	103.70%
9	7252	BROCKWAY	103.57%
9	7810	AUSTIN	103.17%
9	6231	SLIPPERY ROCK	100.00%
9	6325	HUDSON	100.00%
9	9788	HORSHAM	100.00%
10	1063	PHILADELPHIA	184.61%
10	7390	BROOMALL	148.78%
10	3498	ROSLYN	139.53%
10	3514	UNIONTOWN	120.68%
10	6178	RENOVO	112.90%

On April 24, Dept. membership stood at 74,163 members or 94.02% of the 2016-17 year-end total. So far this year 1,573 new members and 334 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 April 24

*Congratulations District Commanders for Leading the Way Forward!*

First Place: DISTRICT 16 - 98.13% - Commander John Moyer

Second Place: DISTRICT 28 - 97.34% - Commander Donald Ramsey

Third Place: DISTRICT 23 - 97.17% - Commander Thomas McFadden

Fourth Place: DISTRICT 14 - 96.98% - Commander John Miner

Fifth Place: DISTRICT 17 - 96.74 - Commander Jesse Rinker

Sixth Place: DISTRICT 25 - 96.48% - Commander Russell Mason

Seventh Place: DISTRICT 1 - 96.36% - Commander Zbigniew Laska

Eighth Place: DISTRICT 26 - 96.29% - Commander Robert Pegg

Ninth Place: DISTRICT 8 - 96.19% - Thomas Goodman

Tenth Place: DISTRICT 13 - 95.95% - Commander James Lindsey



Holding the Top Spot at 98.13%:  
District 16 (Montgomery County)  
Commander John Moyer



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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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# The VFW Auxiliary ... Unwavering Support for Uncommon Heroes



*The Department President Says...*

## Teamwork Pays Off Every Time!

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



It is very hard to believe that this will be my last column as your Department President of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary. The Department of Pennsylvania Auxiliaries have had a busy year, with many programs and projects completed. I can't thank each of the Auxiliaries enough for all their support and dedication to our veterans and the Auxiliaries, it is truly remarkable.

Thank you to the Brothers and Sisters who were leaders within your Auxiliaries, Districts and the Department level. The giving of your time and dedication is truly appreciated by each of the Auxiliaries. My thanks to all Department Chairpersons, Area Chairpersons, District Chairpersons and Auxiliary Chairpersons for your hard work.

At the time of this writing, the Department Membership standings are currently 99.74%, and I know in my heart we will attain our "100% plus" in membership by the June 30, 2018 deadline. Great work to each of the Auxiliaries who attained 100% plus in membership. At press time, the Department has achieved 3 out of the 4 quarterly goals set by the

National organization. I believe we will grab that last quarter goal before the deadline. Teamwork makes this possible.

Please remember to always be kind to others. Say thank you, show support and be mentors to new members. Please don't forget to guide our lapsed members back into our ranks.

Keep working as a team player with your Auxiliary and VFW Comrades. Teamwork is the key to success in everything we do, so let's put the VFW and Auxiliary missions ahead of everything else and get the job done.

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as your Department President for the 2017-2018 term of office. To VFW Department Commander Dwight Fuhrman, thank you for being such a wonderful counterpart as we used teamwork as a guiding force. It has been my privilege to work side by side together.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the Department Convention in June when we will celebrate all the accomplishments of the Auxiliaries in the Department.

To Thomas "Ace" Hanzes and Charlotte Lopes, best wishes for a successful 2018-2019 term of offices. Enjoy your year. Trust me, it will fly by fast, so take it all in and enjoy every minute of your year.



Clockwise from top photo: District 25 members held a Valentine's Day party for veterans in the Butler VA Day Care program. Helping were Dept. Jr. Vice President Sandra Wilder, Dept. Patriotic Instructor Veronica Grant, Jennifer Harvey of Butler Post 249 Auxiliary, Paula Havasi of Post 128 Auxiliary, and Lisa and Patty Donaldson of Post 3577 Auxiliary. McMurray Post 764 Auxiliary delivered turkeys and hams to the City Mission in Washington County so those who would otherwise go without food could enjoy a delicious Easter dinner. Franklin Post 1835 Auxiliary delivered laundry soap, dryer sheets and Music CDs to the Soldiers & Sailors State Veterans Home in Erie. Sue Hoobler of Post 1835 Auxiliary donated a chair lift to the Post Home. Sue's husband Bill Hoobler helped install the lift.



## Our Mission: Comrades Helping Comrades

Linda Dilling, Hospital Program Chairperson - vfwauxldilling@gmail.com



Volunteer Today! Share with your brothers and sisters the message that every veteran at some point in his or her life will pass through a hospital door. We need to make sure our veterans are not alone or forgotten when they are hospitalized!

Give back, because volunteers are vital to our efforts to support hospitalized veterans. Any member or non-member can volunteer their time, skill, talent and interest at any VA or non-VA facility that offers medical or extended care or assisted living services to veterans.

Volunteers help in a variety of ways from giving direction and information

to patients and visitors to data entry and helping in an administrative office. By volunteering, you can gain work experience, learn new skills and meet new people.

Volunteering doesn't mean you have to commit to many hours or whole days. You could be an occasional volunteer offering your time when it's convenient to you.

Volunteering can include offering your assistance when parties are held for veterans, helping a resident play bingo or just lending an ear and listening.

Call your local facility and ask to speak with a staff member in Voluntary Service, Recreation Therapy, Activities or the Director of the facility. By volunteering you will help "Catch the Dream" while "Lighting the way for our Veterans."

## Dept. Auxiliary Convention Set for June 13-16

### Auxiliary Program Agenda

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13** - 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. - Registration  
8:30-10:30 - Floor Practice  
2 p.m. - Council of Administration Meeting  
7 p.m. - Annual VFW/Auxiliary Memorial Service

**THURSDAY, JUNE 14** - 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. - Registration  
8:00 a.m. - Joint Opening with VFW/Auxiliary  
2:15 p.m. - Seating of Officers and Auxiliary Convention Opening

**FRIDAY, JUNE 15** - 8:00 a.m. - Noon - Registration  
8:30 a.m. - Call to Order for Convention Session  
6:30 p.m. - Patriotic Rally

**SATURDAY, JUNE 16** - 8 a.m. - Session Opens  
6 p.m. - Reception for New State Commander/President

*The complete agenda can be found on the Department Auxiliary's website, [www.pavfwaux.org](http://www.pavfwaux.org). We look forward to seeing you at our State Convention in Gettysburg.*

## COMMUNITY SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

Photos on this page appear in some of the Post Community Service Activity Record Books that were entered into the Department's 2017-18 contest. Posts are encouraged to participate in the contest by submitting a scrapbook or video that showcases their outstanding community service. Deadline is April 2019.

Helping to lift the morale of deployed troops during the holidays, Harmony Post 879 teamed up with a local church to send many care packages overseas. The Post paid for the postage to send gifts to many soldiers, which amounted to a large donation due to rising postal rates. Supporting deployed troops shows military personnel that the VFW is serious about its commitment to care for and support today's freedom fighters.



Tobyhanna Post 509 and Auxiliary lead their community in recognizing patriotic holidays including Veterans Day and Memorial Day. Post and Auxiliary members are shown at a local Veterans Park saluting the U.S. flag during the playing of the National Anthem.



Titusville Post 5958 Chaplain Charles Castelluccio, joined by other Post members (not shown), teach students about the folds of the U.S. flag when colors are prepared for presentation to families of deceased veterans.



The Hershey and Hummelstown Volunteer Fire Companies both received donations from Hershey Post 3502 as part of the Post's community service and public safety program. Shown presenting the checks are Post Commander Scott Fritz and Quartermaster David Gyger.



Gratz Post 2385 supports the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank's Military Share Program, which provides nutritious food to military families facing financial hardship. The Post provides both monetary and volunteer assistance to help serve an average of 175 military personnel each month.



Folsom Post 928 and Auxiliary participate in many community service programs, including local Memorial Day recognition activities.



Chalfont Post 3258 is very active in the local community. Members place flags in area cemeteries on veterans' graves, sponsor patriotic student essay contests, share their military experiences with students, hold flag retirement ceremonies, visit retirement communities, and support military activities.

## PERIODICALS