

VFW WELCOMES 2024-25 STATE COMMANDER BARBARA LONCAR AND AUXILIARY PRESIDENT ANDREA MEINTEL



The Pennsylvania VFW has just concluded their elections and are starting its new program year 2024-2025 .

New State VFW Commander Barbara Longcar and Auxiliary VFW President Andrea Meintel were elected June 15 to lead the VFW in the coming year. It is only the second time this has occurred in the history of the Pennsylvania VFW. The Department would like to welcome our new State Line Officers, District Commanders, Chairpersons, and Membership Team and wish them all a successful year.

Brig. Gen. (PA) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General of Veterans Affairs would like to congratulate the Pennsylvania VFW on its newly elected leaders as they begin their new program year. "In Pennsylvania we have a very active, and prominent membership among the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Loncar has served her country in the U.S. Army and been a long-standing member of the VFW working for the good of our veteran's community since 1991. Meintel often says the VFW is in her blood because she is a fourth-generation member now leading the states VFW auxiliary. As women are Pennsylvania's fastest growing segment of our veteran population, it is great to see these women heading up an organization that is so crucial to the future of those who served and sacrificed. They are role models for not just our women veterans, but for all veterans and their supportive families. To all the leaders of our state VFW from the post to the state department, I thank you all for your service."

Brig. Gen. (PA) Maureen Weigl, Deputy Adjutant General of Veterans Affairs

IMMEDIATE PAST STATE COMMANDER

2023 – 2024's Ending creates a new beginning



Comrades:

The 2022-2023 Encourage, Educate, Expand VFW year has been great, and I was honored to have served as your Department Commander.

I would like to thank all the Districts and Posts for their hard work in their respective communities. You do so much in your communities, and you should be proud of yourselves.

I have travelled throughout the state with PDP Valerie DeCorte and we visited approximately 228 VFW Posts and learned a lot about what you are

doing. I really appreciated the hospitality that you showed us.

We still have some work to do. I would encourage you to run your VFW Post as a VFW and not a bar. Following the VFW National By-Laws, State Laws will keep you on the right path and please continue to break up those internal clicks on all levels, they are killing us from the inside. Sometimes change works to better an organization.

Our membership is key to our organization, and we must work harder to attract new members and keep them involved. Please call your post membership to do a buddy check. Ask them if they need anything. Show them that you care about their well-being. It does not take much time to do this, and they will appreciate it.

I would like to congratulate all the newly elected officers and I know they will work hard to keep this Department going in the right direction. Comrades, ask them for help when needed and work with them.

Let's continue making this department something to be proud of while we educate, encourage and expand.

Spike

David W. Gyger

David W. "Spike" Gyger
Immediate Past State Commander
Department of PA VFW 2023 – 2024



"When there are no consequences for poor work ethic, and no reward for good work ethic, there is no motivation."

STATE COMMANDER



BARBARA "BARB" LONCAR
STATE COMMANDER

Together Everyone Achieves More! (TEAM)

I would like to thank everyone, Comrades and Auxiliary members for your support during my years as Jr. and Sr. Vice Commander. I am looking forward to doing my best to support you during my current year as your Department of PA VFW Commander. I know that we can have an awesome year working together as a Team!

My theme this year is "Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM)." Why did I pick this as my theme, because we need to work together to succeed. In order for our organization to grow we need to become one cohesive unit.

Comrades or Veterans depending on what you like to be referred to as need to work together at the Post, District and Department levels. We need to learn from each other and share our ideas with each other. Do not discount others' ideas just because of having a certain way of doing things or "we've always done it that way." You need to try new ideas as they may be very successful for your post. You need to make your Post a family friendly and cohesive unit.

Auxiliaries need to be looked at as an asset to help your post grow. The Auxiliary is part of the VFW Family and part of the team. We are both here to support veterans and their families just like the auxiliary is part of the VFW family. We both need to work together and in doing so we can grow our organization. The Auxiliary can recruit for the VFW and the VFW can recruit for the Auxiliary. Neither part of this organization should try to take over the other but instead join forces to become a strong organization.

Each Post should have a copy of the most recent Bylaws/Ritual book plus the most recent Auxiliaries Bylaws/Ritual book if they have an auxiliary. The Auxiliaries should also have a copy of the most recent VFW Bylaws/Ritual book along with their own Bylaws/Ritual book. Having this information on hand will help both sides of the organization know how to work with the other side.

Once you have a strong Post that is active in the community other veterans will want to join your post. If you have an Auxiliary, they can help you within the community and add to the strength of your post. If you have a strong



Installing new PA State Commander Barbara Loncar is Ruth Fairchild, chief of staff. David Swanson, State Sergeant of Arms, witnesses the installation.

post, you can keep the Home Association Members from over taking your home post! We currently have too many posts that have been taken over by the Home Association and kicked out the Veterans. We as veterans have let this happen by not recruiting new members to replace us when we get older and unable to help as we have had in the past. We have allowed our home association to become the stronger element within our post. Home Associations do not have the same priorities as the VFW as they're just out for themselves not the veterans. Don't let your home association take over your posts!

Once you grow your Post and Auxiliary into a strong post, share your success with others. Work on growing a strong District and infuse your success throughout the state! Every Veteran and their family are important to the VFW. We need to make sure that they feel welcome and important. We need to become one big Happy Family, Veterans and Auxiliaries!

STATE SR. VICE COMMANDER



WILLIAM "BILL" ROLAND
STATE SR. VICE COMMANDER

As I end my 2023-2024 year as State Jr. Vice Commander, I would like to thank everyone for your words of encouragement, support and especially how much I have learned this past year. As I move to State Sr. Vice Commander, I am sure I will continue to learn from you, and I look forward to it. Over the past year I have seen problems at posts from financial issues, bickering and

social members taking charge. To be honest, I find it difficult...We have all experienced difficulties and there is no reason this should be happening. We're family and a team. I know State Commander Loncar will be available to help any individual, post or district that needs assistance. I will also be there for you. Please do not wait for an issue to arise or get out of control. Please reach out the Department Headquarters, we are here for you. I look forward to working with you as State Sr. Vice Commander 2024-25.

STATE JR. VICE COMMANDER



JIM BROWN
STATE JR. VICE COMMANDER

VFW Sisters and Brothers,

The 2024 VFW PA State Convention was extremely exciting and educational in many ways. I am humbled to have been voted YOUR Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Pennsylvania Jr. Vice Commander. The time I spent traveling the State last year visiting Posts and Districts, and listening to the plethora of ideas and concerns, was and is extremely informative. Sisters and Brothers, let it be known your voices have not fallen on deaf ears. We must continue to learn and evolve from what has previously been done. We are a Family, and as with all families we will disagree often. Let us not dwell on negatives and tearing down or disrespecting our fellow Sisters and Brothers. Turn your strength and energy towards building one another up, to foster true Comradeship. We need not forget the past, but we need to put the past in the rear-view mirror and make this the time for us all to come together. Let us focus on VFW Dept. of PA Commander Loncar’s “TEAM” philosophy and come together.

I encourage ALL Members to utilize the resources throughout your Posts, Districts, and Department. Fear not individuals in leadership roles at various levels, we too are people just like all of you. We are all here to help! There are several Post Training Instructions (PTIs) throughout the Department. These trainings are for ALL MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING! You are all highly encouraged to attend one of the training courses.

I look forward to traveling the Department seeing many of you I already know, while continuing to meet more of my Sisters and Brothers. Until we meet again or for the first time, you may all rest assured, I will put my utmost efforts into ensuring that the betterment of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is always at the forefront!

STATE ADJUTANT/QUARTERMASTER



JOHN B. GETZ, JR
STATE QUARTERMASTER

Department of Pennsylvania, I would like to thank you for voting me in again for another year as your Department Quartermaster and the appointed position as your State Adjutant for the year 2024-25. We will have a busy year ahead of us, but we must understand if you follow the bylaws, there should never be any issues. We need to do more work with the trustees to make sure they understand how to do their Audit report and reconcile the bank accounts and post books. You need to depend on them to do a proper job and if there is anything that is not being done by the bylaws, they need to

be reported to leadership. I am here to train anyone who requires training or requests assistance. Please reach out. We are not looking to shut down your post. We want to provide help, but the only way is for you to ask for it or provide question to us. We all need to start the year off with a cheerful and positive outlook and help all our Veterans and their families. It is time for all of us to be a family within the VFW. Let’s start out with a positive year as the VFW was intended and not a bar. As many of you know I am always here to assist you and your posts.

CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE COMMANDER



RUTH A. FAIRCHILD
CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE
COMMANDER

Greetings, comrades,

Welcome to a brand-new VFW year! As Commander Barb’s chief of staff, it’s my job to guide her and help her out wherever and whenever I can. As a past state commander, I know firsthand how busy she’ll be and how many miles she’ll be traveling to teach and promote the VFW and its programs. What we must remember is that she, or even she and I, cannot do it alone. We need each one of you to make the programs successful. We need every one of you to recruit to keep our VFWs viable. And we need every one of you to help make this year a success.

TEAM (Together, Everyone Achieves More) is this year’s program theme, so let’s get motivated, work together, and show these other states that Pennsylvania knows what the VFW is about, and we know how to take care of our veterans and their families.

LET’S GO TEAM!!!

IMMEDIATE PAST STATE CHAPLAIN



REV. PETER R. HOOK
PAST STATE CHAPLAIN

Passing the Torch: A Grateful Farewell

As my time as your Department of Pennsylvania State Chaplain draws to a close, I am moved to express my heartfelt gratitude for the privilege of serving in this esteemed position and role. It has been an honor to serve alongside my fellow veterans, offering spiritual guidance, support, and compassion to those who have served our nation with courage and sacrifice.

Throughout my tenure, I have been humbled as I have observed the dedication and commitment of the many Post and District chaplains who faithfully serve our veterans and their families. Their selfless devotion to providing comfort and solace in times of need is a true testament to the spirit of camaraderie and service that defines the VFW.

To each and every Post and District chaplain, I offer my deepest thanks for your tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to serve those who served. Your presence brings

comfort to those who are grieving, strength to those who are struggling, and hope to those who are in need. Your compassion and dedication are a source of inspiration to us all, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked alongside you in service to our fellow veterans.

To the Department of Pennsylvania VFW, its officers and members and its Auxiliary, I extend my sincere appreciation for your steadfast support and encouragement throughout my time as your Department Chaplain. Your support and commitment to our mission and your dedication to our veterans are a testament to the values that unite us as an organization, and I am honored to have been a part of such a noble and important cause.

As I prepare to pass the torch, I do so with a sense of optimism for the future of our organization. The VFW and its Auxiliary have a long and storied history of service to our nation's veterans, and I have every confidence that it will continue to thrive and make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for the opportunity to serve as your State Chaplain. It has been the honor of a lifetime, and I will cherish the memories and friendships that I have made during my time in this role.

Blessings as you continue to serve.

STATE CHAPLAIN



RICHARD DENISON
STATE CHAPLAIN

In the typical Army chaplain corps description of a chaplain's work, we are told we are to nurture the living, care for the wounded, and honor the dead. This is indeed the work of the chaplain, but it does not speak much about the character of a chaplain.

In Air Force Chaplain school it was drilled into our heads that a chaplain should be a "visible reminder of the Holy." But what does that lofty expression mean? Certainly, it speaks about the character of a chaplain as an example to others, but there is much more to this. A chaplain is present as a reminder of our highest values and goals and, at times, must not be afraid to speak up in defense of those goals. But the very act of leading ceremonies and prayers can serve as a reminder of our highest ideals.

Each post meeting begins and ends in prayer. In the middle of the meeting, we lift up our concern for our national home in our prayers. Sometimes it is appropriate when we share names of a comrade or family of a comrade in distress, with the commander's

permission, to offer prayer for those in need. Why is prayer so central to our meetings?

Our ceremonies to honor our flag, recite the Pledge of Allegiance and ask God's guidance via prayer always remind us, before we do any other business, of our desire to honor those who gave their lives in our nation's service, remember our POWs-MIAs, serve God and country and continue to defend and serve our nation.

In the business of our meetings, it is easy to get distracted. We struggle with finances, leadership, planning activities, meeting all our goals and many other things. But the purpose of each of the stated goals to become an All-State or an All-American post is related to the higher purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Our chaplains, as they share in leading the various post ceremonies, are a visible reminder of those higher purposes. Remember, it is not simply about wearing a different colored hat – it is about continuing our enlistment oath by still serving God and country.

Let's work together to nurture the living, care for the afflicted and honor the dead as we focus our ongoing service to God, country, veterans and local communities.

Blessings as we begin another year of serving God and country together.

SAFETY CORNER

By Safety Chairmen Delaney

STATE COMMANDER BARBARA LONCAR APPOINTS NEW STATE SAFETY CHAIRMAN

The newly appointed state safety chairman Brian Delaney comes to us from VFW Post 4712 in Simpson, where he currently serves as the post adjutant. Brian is also the Junior Vice Commander for District 10 and currently is employed by the PA Department of Corrections at SCI Waymart. Brian served in the U.S. Army and Pennsylvania Army National Guard from January 1999 to January 2008. Brian has two overseas deployments to Bosnia in 2002-2003 and to Al-Asad Airbase Iraq, 2005-2006. Brian is very excited about his appointment and is looking forward to sending his quarterly safety newsletters to all his comrades in the Department of Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars.

2024 -25 Safety awards

Recognition is given each year to one firefighter, police officer and EMS responder. All nominations must be made through a Pennsylvania VFW Post.

Commanders, to nominate someone please use the forms located on the department's website. To download the forms, visit www.vfwpa.org and click the programs tab and then the safety link.

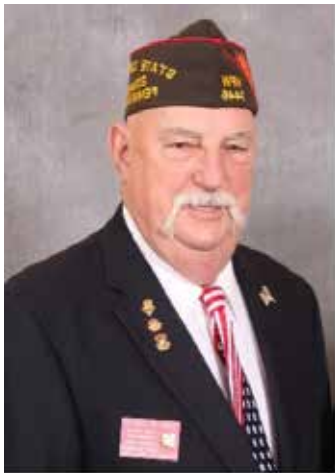
Nominations forms for all three require a letter of endorsement from the Post Commander. Deadline for submitting entries to the safety chairman is **December 15th**.



National Public Servant Award – Post safety chairmen play a key role in promotion, organization and submission of nominations for this national VFW award. Again, all forms can be found at www.vfwpa.org Any questions please feel free to contact the department's safety chairman.

SUMMER HEAT SAFETY

1. **Stay hydrated:** Drink plenty of water before and during work.
2. **Wear appropriate clothing:** Light-colored and lightweight clothing is recommended.
3. **Take breaks:** Shorten work times with frequent breaks.
4. **Avoid extreme temperature changes:** Stay indoors during the hottest part of the day.
5. **Protect against sun exposure:** Wear a hat and use sunscreen.
6. **Never leave children, older adults, or pets alone in a car.**



A LIFETIME OF SERVICE TO COMMONWEALTH AND COUNTRY

Past Pennsylvania VFW Commander Gary R. Smith, 85, passed away April 17 at home. He was the loving husband of Christine Smith, Past District 21 Commander. Both served their home VFW Post 1446 in Red Lion.

"Gary served in the Air Force on active duty for 14 years," said Christine. "He was devoted to serve his nation and serve our nation's veterans as a VFW member for over 50 years."

Christine said that Gary grew up an Army brat with his father who served in the active Army for more than three decades and was a veteran of World War II and Korea.

Inspired by his father's service, Gary served in the U.S. Air Force, Det. 4, Special Communications Center from 1957 to 1970, achieving the rank of Staff Sergeant. He was awarded the Vietnam Service Medal with four bronze service stars, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, and Republic of Vietnam Gallantry cross with Palm.

"When he returned from Vietnam, he was impacted by the way he was treated," said Christine, in reference to the unpopularity of the Vietnam War at the time. "He joined the VFW right away because he was proud of his service, but he wanted to support veterans. He never wanted them to be treated as poorly as his generation was when they returned."

Gary would serve as the VFW State Commander in the program year 2014-15. He served in many positions at the post and district levels achieving All-American status. He was a life member of the VFW Red Lion Post 1446, VFW National Home, member of the Red Lion American Legion Post 543 and Military Order of the Cottie. He was also a member of the NRA, Moose and Vietnam Veterans of America.

"Gary and I served together in District 21," said Pennsylvania VFW State Commander Barbra Loncar. "It was an honor to work with him. He was a man truly dedicated to serving veterans."

"Past State Commander Gary Smith was a true patriot," said Immediate Past State Commander David W. "Spike" Gyger. "He should be remembered for an incredible record of service to his country and veterans, spanning a lifetime. He is a man that truly made a difference."

Gary was born on April 5, 1939, in Meadville, to the late Irving and Emma Smith. Gary had worked as an owner/operator truck driver for 30 years after his military service.

Christine would like to thank everyone for their support and condolences by the VFW family.



WAYNE D. PERRY, PAST STATE COMMANDER AND COMMUNITY LEADER PASSES

Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars Past State Commander Wayne D. Perry passed away in June.

"Commander Perry was a true leader," said Pennsylvania State VFW Commander Barabra Loncar. "We were fortunate to have him serve the veteran community for so many years."

Perry was a recent member of VFW Post 3368, Perry was a long time member of Post 7505 and elected State VFW Commander at the 2019 State Convention. He had previously served as State Senior and State Junior Vice Commander. Commander Perry served in the United States Navy from 1963-1967. He received the Armed Force Expeditionary Medal, the National Defense Medal and the Navy Good Conduct Medal. His VFW eligibility was earned with his duty in the Dominican Republic. Commander Perry was a Chaplain and Commander of Post 499, a past Commander of Post 7505 and a past District 25 Commander. At the Dept. of Pennsylvania he was co-chairman for the Internal Affairs Committee, and he served as an advisor for the district commanders.

Perry served for the National VFW on the House Resolutions Committee, and was appointed by the National VFW Commander as an Aide-de-Camp, a special Aide-de-Camp and an Assistant Inspector General.

Perry was a VFW Gold Legacy Life Member; a member of the VFW Military Order of the Cooties; a member of the American Legion and Mars Kiwanis club; and a life member of the Mars Volunteer Fire Department.

He was also a charter member of the Adams Area Fire District, a member of the Butler County Fire Police and a member of the Pennsylvania Fire Police.

PSC Commander Perry was involved in youth sports where he coached football, baseball, basketball and soccer. Wayne leaves behind his wife Barbara, His two children, Michelle McKinley (Matt), Brian Perry (Sarah). His stepchildren, Karen Kardos (Jonathon), Rob Green (Esther) and seven grandchildren. Barb would like to thank the Dept. of PA VFW for all the support during this difficult time.



ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA



Lancaster, PA Marine Female Warrior, U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Lydia Bearinger, a Lancaster, Pennsylvania native and athlete with Team Marine Corps, wins a gold medal for the rowing competition during the 2024 DoD Warrior Games Challenge at ESPN's Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando, Florida, June 25, 2024. The DoD Warrior Games are composed of over 200 wounded, ill, and injured service members and veteran athletes, competing in 11 adaptive sporting events June 21- 30, 2023 in Orlando, Florida. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Ethan Miller)

Bearinger said on the Warrior Games website: "In July of 2022 I experienced a traumatic parachute accident that left me with a long road to recovery. In September of 2023 I was transferred to Wounded Warrior Battalion-West."

"Participating in the Warrior Athlete Conditioning Events has been an instrumental part of my recovery, providing me with a community that has given me the support and motivation that I didn't know I needed. The positive atmosphere created by the athletic trainers, coaches and fellow athletes has truly been life changing for my physical recovery, mental well-being and emotional healing. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of such a motivating and uplifting team."



Ford City Post 4843 Dedication Memorial Ceremony with Past State Commander David "Spike" Gyger.



Palmyra VFW Post 6417 and Auxiliary Memorial Day Parade

ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA



Pittsburgh native U.S. Navy Fireman First Class Walter Schleiter was killed in Pearl Harbor attack returns home for Burial



The installation of Officers of the Media VFW Post 3460

Left to Right: Quartermaster Asa Warrington, Jr. Vice Commander Frank Donnelly, Trustee David Pastuszek, Trustee Gerald Tempesta, Trustee John Bucci, Adjutant Joe Casey, Commander Michael Baker, District 7 Commander Johnny Walker, Sr. Vice Commander Anthony Martinelli and District 7 Chaplain Justin Cohn



Chaplain of the Year Awarded to Micah Hahn

Dan West, VFW Adjutant General, Dustin Zimmerman, District 15 Commander, Micah Hahn, Rev. Peter R. Hook, Past PA State Chaplain



SUICIDE PREVENTION 2024-25 LAUNCHES

The overall goal of the VFW Department of Pennsylvania is to reduce the rate of suicide among its veterans. This must be a top priority for our members in Pennsylvania. Our program will focus on four objectives.

1. Engaging and supporting other Veteran Suicide Prevention Initiatives
2. Conducting activities at Department functions to improve Mental Health
3. Long term fund-raising and planning for a Veterans Family Mental Wellness weekend
4. Post and District Challenge

It is estimated that veterans are 1.5 times more likely to die by suicide than those who never served in the military. The risk factor for women veterans is higher, at a rate of 2.2 times that of those who never served.

The leading cause of death throughout the COVID-19 pandemic for veterans was suicide. In 2021, the suicide rate for confirmed veterans was 6,392. This was 114 more than 2020. From 2001 – 2021, 133,867 of our veterans have ended their own lives. There has not been one year in which that number has dropped below 6000 a year. The highest rates are ages 18-54.

The Suicide Prevention program is challenging each District and each Post to individually combat what is arguably the most important crisis facing our veterans right now.

Part 1: Engaging and supporting other Veteran Suicide Prevention Initiatives

- One Tribe Foundation – This organization is supported by our incoming National CiC Al Liphardt. One Tribe’s mission is to create a community

that raises awareness and combats suicide by empowering veterans, first responders, medical frontline workers and their families through traditional and non-traditional therapies. www.1tribefoundation.org

- Irreverent Warriors – This organization is supported by many members of our department and is veteran specific in their mission: “To bring veterans together, using humor and camaraderie, to improve mental health, and prevent veteran suicide.” www.irreverentwarriors.com
- Mission 22 - Mission 22 provides support to veterans and their families when they need it most: right now. Through a comprehensive approach of outreach, events, and programs, we’re promoting long-term wellness and sustainable growth. www.mission22.com
- Stop Soldier Suicide – This organization’s mission is solving the issue of suicide among veterans. They have a goal to reduce the rate by 40% by 2030. www.stopsoldiersuicide.org

Part 2: Conducting activities at Department functions to improve Mental Health

You’re going to want to come to the Mid-Winter Conference, Testimonials, and Department Convention this upcoming year... We have a plan! Team and group activities have been proven to be a benefit to our veterans, and we plan on having things aimed at improving mental health and reducing stress at each of these state functions. A piece of advice... You might want to bring your PT gear... You never know when you might need it!

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PROGRAM CHAIRPERSONS 2024 - 2025

Program	Name	Email	Phone
Arthritis	Larry Hawthorne	larry.hawthorne@att.net	724-699-2521
Barger Scholarship	Dwight Fuhrman	Fuhrman1970@comcast.net	717-578-3151
Buddy Poppy	Claresa Whitfield	claresa1974@yahoo.com	610-322-1410
ByLaws	Glenn R. Umberger Jr.	Glenn.umberger@gmail.com	610-517-3455
Children’s Coloring Contest	Glenn Owen	buck012@frontiernet.net	570-878-5577
Communications Contest	Dwayne MacKenzie	eph rata vfw@outlook.com	717-823-1002
Community Service	Robert Emerick	robert.emerick5566@yahoo.com	412-992-6580
Diabetes	Larry Hawthorne	larry.hawthorne@att.net	724-699-2521
Healthcare Award	Ruth Fairchild	fairchildra64@aol.com	724-544-4745
Homeless Veterans	David Gyger	djc57@verizon.net	717-991-1473
Legislative – National	Richard Casey	commander@trappvfw.org	610-937-1438
Legislative – PA	Jessica King	commander8430vfw@gmail.com	412-618-8902
National Home	Ron Peters	acavrp@hotmail.com	814-596-1698
Patriot’s Pen	Bill Lamond	ta30chev@gmail.com	570-241-5875
POW / MIA	Dusten Zimmerman	d.e.zimmerman@live.com	570-418-1379
Safety Awards	Brian Delaney	vfwpost4712adj@outlook.com	570-575-3589
Scouting	Randy J. Rice	randy-rice@live.com	717-814-7914
Smart-Maher Teacher	Glenn Owen	buck012@frontiernet.net	570-878-5577
Student Veterans	Jesse Olson	vfw.pa.sva@gmail.com	706-577-7293
Suicide Prevention	Dave Dibelius	pavfwrider@comcast.net	267-718-4475
Veterans Court	Jeff Puckett	jeffpuckett153@yahoo.com	717-877-5702
VMS (Veteran and Military Service)	TBD		
VFW Riders	Anthony Warner	anthony@gowarner.com	412-983-8669
	Larry Bills	lbills70@yahoo.com	717-824-1614
Voice of Democracy	Vince Gavin	vincentdangavin@gmail.com	570-862-2955
Women Veterans	Amy MacKenzie	pawomenvets@gmail.com	717-575-3982

SUICIDE PREVENTION 2024-25 LAUNCHES

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Part 3: Long term fund-raising and planning for a Veterans Family Mental Wellness weekend.

Family involvement in mental health is critical. It is the goal of the Suicide Prevention program to create and execute annually, a weekend Mental Health Retreat for our veterans and their family. This program needs assistance from the District and Post levels to make this happen. Our 2024-25 goal is to raise approximately \$25,000 - \$30,000 to be used to secure a location and provide a Friday night through Sunday morning event in the future for Pennsylvania veterans which will focus on several areas including but not limited to:

- 1. Mental Health Improvement
- 2. Resource Management
- 3. Family Element Focus
- 4. Financial Management Specialists
- 5. Reducing Stress

Part 4: Post and District Challenge

- 1. Fitness Challenges:
 - a. 22 A Meeting Challenge: 22 Push-ups a Meeting. Video your Post Meeting participants doing 22 Push-ups per meeting from September through December and **post to Department social media or email the videos to the Chairperson and be entered for a life membership drawing and again from January through May** to raise awareness of 22 Veteran Suicides a Day.
 - b. September 22 A Day Challenge: Pennsylvania Legislation has adopted September as “Military Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month.”

Challenge yourself to 22 Push-ups a Day for every day of the month in September. **Provide information to the Department Chairperson and or post to Department social media and be entered for a drawing for a life/ legacy membership.**

- c. 5 X 5 or 10 X 10 Challenge: Do a walk/hike. 5 miles with 5 pounds on your back or 10 miles with 10 pounds on your back. Post to Department social media or email the Department Chairperson with the video or photos. **5 X 5 Challenge participants will be entered into a random drawing for a \$100 VFW Store Gift Certificate. 10 X 10 Challenge participants will be entered into a random drawing for a \$200 VFW Store Gift Certificate.**

Post it to your Post or District social media or share it with one of the Department Facebook pages or groups. Let the Department Chairperson know you’re involved so we can recognize it!

2. Support Challenge:

- a. Get involved with Irreverent Warriors or the Travis Manion Foundation events. Donate to either organization to sponsor Veterans or sign up to attend or volunteer! **Provide documentation to the Department Chairperson and be entered for a \$200 VFW Store Gift Certificate.**

The Suicide Prevention Chairperson will ensure that resources are publicized in each newsletter and that new resources are researched for our members. Always know you can visit www.veteranscrisisline.net , Call/Dial 988 and Press 1, or text 838255.

Contact the Suicide Prevention Chairperson at: 267-718-4475 or

Email: pavfwrider@comcast.net or david@gphonesolutions.com

DISTRICT COMMANDERS 2024 - 2025

District	Name	Phone	Cell Phone	Email
1	Robin Liberty		215-870-3392	libertypalegion@gmail.com
7	William A. Dondero, III	484-888-0659	484-888-0659	williamdondero@gmail.com
8	Benjamin Mastridge	215-355-4973	267-254-9062	bensarmy@hotmail.com
9	Michael J. McKenzie	717-779-6139		mjmckenzie1@gmail.com
10	Vincent Gavin	570-862-2955		Vincentdangavin@gmail.com
11	James W. Merk		570-441-2274	ffe25@myyahoo.com
12	Richard K. Cassem, II	813-335-0807	813-335-0807	rkcassem@yahoo.com
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PA VFW ACCREDITED SERVICE OFFICERS & CLAIMS CONSULTANTS

VFW Veteran Services Officers and Claim Consultants are employed by the VFW to assist all veterans – regardless of membership in the VFW. This service is FREE. All of our veterans deserve comprehensive assistance with applying for and understanding their VA disability benefits. Please reach out to any of the Service Officers/Claims Consultants near you. Feel free to refer any veteran in need of assistance to one of us at the VFW.

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THE VFW AUXILIARY



MARY JEAN MASTRIDGE
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
DEPARTMENT OF PA VFW AUXILIARY

My "Let Freedom Ring" year has drawn to a close. I will always remember the special times with our AUX members throughout Pennsylvania who made it a tremendous success! I am proud of the achievements of this 2023-24 program year. The camaraderie and hospitality that was shown to me and Brenda Johnson, my Chief of Staff, by the VFW members was wonderful. We shared issues, accomplishments and plans for the future. Brenda and I spent time with our institutionalized warriors who really enjoy visitors and love to tell stories. While my future Auxiliary travels will be within District 8, I will remember the time spent traveling, will always remember the people involved and memories created during my year as President of the Department of Pennsylvania VFW Auxiliary.



ANDREA MEINTEL
PRESIDENT
DEPARTMENT OF PA VFW AUXILIARY

Honoring our heroes: A message from the new President of the PA VFW Auxiliary

As I reflect on my recent attendance at a Vietnam Veterans Pinning Ceremony, I am filled with a deep sense of honor and appreciation for our veterans. Watching the pride on the faces of those who served during the Vietnam Era and the heartfelt appreciation from everyone present took me back to a memorable day in November 2022 at the Bryce Jordan Center.

It was Veterans Appreciation Day at a home Penn State football game, and I had the honor of helping at the VFW membership booth. Amidst the sea of blue and white, I noticed a gentleman walking down the aisle wearing a Vietnam Veteran hat. I approached him, extended my hand, and thanked him for his service while welcoming him home. What followed was a moment that will stay with me forever.

As a tear fell down his face, he told me that I was the first person to welcome him home. He shared his story of returning from the war, landing in Seattle, Washington, only to be taken through a service area to avoid the protesters upstairs who were booing and spitting on our servicemembers. His experience, like those of so many of our veterans, is a stark reminder of the sacrifices they have made and the challenges they have faced upon their return.

Stories like his fuel my dedication to the mission of the VFW and VFW Auxiliary. Our organization is committed to ensuring that no veteran feels forgotten or unappreciated. We strive to provide support, recognition, and a sense of community for all who have served this great country.

As the newly elected President of the VFW Auxiliary for the 2024-25 year, I am more determined than ever to focus our energies on serving our veterans. No one does more for veterans than the VFW and VFW Auxiliary, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that every veteran receives the honor and support they deserve. It is this sense of gratitude that drives me to want to see our organization thrive into the future.

I appreciate you all for joining this mission, and I ask you to continue to show your support and dedication. Whether through volunteering, advocacy, or simply extending a hand and a heartfelt "thank you," we can make a difference in the lives of our veterans. By working TOGETHER, we can create a community where every veteran feels valued and welcomed home.



AMY PETERSON
MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN 2024-2025

ARE YOU READY PENNSYLVANIA????!!!
.... for crazy MEMBERSHIP shenanigans?????
Jump on the BAND wagon and BUCKLE UP!

There is no time like **NOW** to get motivated with new membership **GOALS!**
Membership is such a critical part of our organization; I believe we can
TOP THE CHARTS!

Yes, membership can be 'stale,' boring and monotonous....
BUT it does not have to be.

With Dept President's membership theme being **"STRIKE UP THE BAND!"**
I could not think of a better way to get your **"ASK"** in gear and get your groove on!

Let's MAKE NOISE and BE SEEN! This is the time of year for festivals, fairs, and other community events.....set up a table, walk around, make a scene & **SHARE YOUR WHY!**

Go out of your comfort zone and USE your passion and speak from your heart....
ATTRACT members for the **entire organization!** Keep several applications close on hand...everywhere we go, there **IS** a post or auxiliary member!
Think about it...if **ALL** current members recruited just **ONE new member**,
can you even imagine the outcome??

It blows my mind just thinking about it! **BOOM!**

SPARK it up! SMILE and SHARE what the VFW and Auxiliary is all about.... Let's face it, we live in a "keyboard world" and most of us are lost without our phones...
USE that to your advantage!

WORK TOGETHER with your Posts,
LEARN from each other and **EMBRACE** the changes!

Think outside of the meeting room.... make **JOINT** reels/stories/videos (it is easy, even I can do that!), create virtual information packets for the tech savvy, email events and meeting recaps for those that can't attend, EVERY member has value.....
feeling welcome is powerful!

Remind your community often that we ARE here for our Veterans and families
by sharing pics/posts of ceremonies, events, festivals, fundraisers, youth contests
and more!

Exciting Auxiliary changes to come this year include:

- **NEW DIVISIONS, UPDATED AWARDS, NEW DEADLINES, NEW ALL-STATE!**
- National will have a **NEW QR CODE** with Auxiliary membership info, programs and much more.... Cutting the cost of handouts people end up tossing away later.

(I KNOW????? Can I get a HECK YESSSSS????!!!!!!)

I'm asking **ALL members** to work **"Together Helping Veterans"** and
GO for THAT 100%+++!
"Together. Everyone. Achieves. More." ----- TOGETHER, Let's DO THIS!


CEMETERY PLOTS AVAILABLE

Cemetery plots have been generously donated throughout Pennsylvania to the PA VFW. These plots are available to our veterans or spouse at no expense. Plots will need to be opened, and that fee must be paid. If you are in need, below is the list of participating cemeteries, their location and number of available plots.

- Bradford County Memorial Gardens, Towanda, PA – 5 plots
- Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Johnstown, PA – 194 plots
- Mount Rose Cemetery, York, PA – 2 plots
- Jefferson Memorial Cemetery and Funeral Home, Pittsburgh, PA – 3 plots
- Edgewood Memorial Park, Glen Mills, PA – 7 plots
- Rosedale Memorial Park, Bensalem, PA – 212 plots
- Conestoga Memorial Park, Lancaster County– 3 plots
- Philadelphia Memorial Park, Frazer, PA – 10 plots
- Sunset Memorial Park, Huntingdon Valley, PA – 4 plots
- Mechanicsburg Cemetery Association, Mechanicsburg – 2 plots
- Valley Forge Memorial Gardens – 13 plots
- Castle View Memorial Gardens, New castle – 15 plots
- Susquehanna Memorial Gardens, York, PA – 4 plots
- Laurel Hill Memorial Gardens, Columbia, PA – 2 plots
- Cedar Hill Memorial Park, 1700 Airport Road, Allentown, PA – 2 plots



PERIODICALS



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

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PVT Allen J Beck, Jr
POST 5265
Spring Grove, PA



June 15, 2024

Congratulations!

Commander, VFW Department of Pennsylvania
Barbara Loncar
VFW Post 5265 & Auxiliary
and
Auxiliary President, VFW Department of Pennsylvania
Andrea Meintel
VFW Post 5265 Auxiliary



We wish them a successful year as they serve the VFW Department of Pennsylvania 2024 -2025



SAVE THE DATE

CELEBRATING AMERICA'S FREEDOM EVENT

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2024

VFW NATIONAL HOME

The Department of PA VFW Auxiliary has chartered a bus to the VFW National Home for the 2024 National President's CAFÉ.

We will leave from Department Headquarters on Friday, September 6th at 6:00 A.M.for the Saturday CAFÉ program in Eaton Rapids, Mi. and we return on Sunday, September 8th.

All VFW and Auxiliary members are welcomed and encouraged to join in the opportunity to visit the National Home and participate in this program.

All registration information can be found on both the VFW and Auxiliary websites.

Don't miss out! Make your reservations now!

Please take some time and checkout our website for all up-to-date information and lots of support materials, including the 2023-2024 Program Book www.vfwauxpa.org