

MID-WINTER 2026 VOD AND PATRIOT'S PEN

“HOW ARE YOU SHOWING PATRIOTISM AND SUPPORT FOR OUR COUNTRY?”

The Department’s Mid-Winter Conference was a time of celebration, information-sharing and inspiration that gave VFW officers and members in attendance the direction and resources they need to continue the VFW’s mission.

Representing the VFW National Headquarters was National Inspector General Christopher Haynes. Haynes thanked State Commander Bill Roland for having him at the Mid-Winter Conference, saying he enjoyed the great hospitality of the Dept. of PA and touring the Gettysburg battlefields.

The Conference agenda also featured guest speaker PA Attorney General David Sunday, check presentations for the Barger Scholarship and Diabetes Walk. There were many VFW training sessions for Suicide Prevention from a VA representative, VFW Service Officer Benefits training by Department Service Officer Jessica King, Membership training by Membership Chairman Thomas Sally, Home Associations training by Bill Stellfox and Disciplinary Actions training by John Getz State Adjutant.

During the State VOD banquet, a crowd of 425 VFW and Auxiliary leaders were honored to have 25 Districts participate in the VOD and Patriot's Pen contest this year! All of these young students are Winners!

“How are you showing Patriotism and support for our Country?”

- 1st place Award (District 17/Post 6631) Kelsey Persons
- 2nd Place Award (District 21/Post 8896) Abigail Myers
- 3rd Place Award (District 8/Post 175) Ashlynn Halbe
- 4th Place Award (District 27/Post 3368) Caylin Raymond
- 5th Place Award (District 29/Post 9199) Roman Panza

Patriot’s Pen Award

- 1st Place Award (District 21/Post 8951) Casseim Small
- 2nd Place Award (District 18/Post 6168) Jolie Buisch
- 3rd Place Award (District 19/Post 2145) Ethan Acey

Department of Pennsylvania



79th Annual Voice of Democracy

2026-Group Photo of VOD and Patriot's Pen Participants

Department of Pennsylvania



79th Annual Voice of Democracy

VOD-2026-1st Place Winner- District 17-Kelsey Persons

Department of Pennsylvania



79th Annual Voice of Democracy

Patriot's Pen 1st Place Winner-District 21-Casseim Small

STATE COMMANDER



WILLIAM "BILL" ROLAND
STATE COMMANDER

I hope everyone had a safe and enjoyable holiday season. Our Mid-Winter Conference was a tremendous success, filled with valuable training, productive meetings, and great camaraderie. I would like to thank our Voice of Democracy Chair Vince Gavin, Patriot's Pen Chairman Bill Lamond, and Auxiliary Chairwoman Karen Mooney for an outstanding weekend with our students.

I have always believed the veterans' community is a family—and I truly mean that. Like any family, we will occasionally have disagreements or conflicts. However, attacking one another is not acceptable, and this is something I struggle with. This year, we have seen far too many 900 disciplinary charges that could have been resolved simply by sitting down and having a conversation.

Instead, we sometimes choose to take issues to social media, local officials, or even the news media. That does not reflect "family" to me. While some 900s are absolutely necessary, I ask that before filing a disciplinary action, you pause and ask yourself whether this is truly the best step—or whether a conversation with your District Commander, State Adjutant, State Commander, or Judge Advocate might resolve the issue more effectively.

Our Internal Affairs team has been extremely busy this year. Their efforts have resolved many issues that I wish we never had to face. They have traveled countless miles, devoted many hours, and worked tirelessly to help us move forward. They are not here to hurt anyone—they are here to help us improve.

Our Veteran Service Officers and Claims Consultants continue to do outstanding work, bringing millions of dollars in benefits to veterans in Pennsylvania, Europe, and other states. I sincerely thank them for their dedication. Act 66, which helps fund our Service Officers, has undergone changes that are now impacting our budget in ways we have not previously experienced. We are fighting—and will continue to fight—these changes so this vital program can continue serving our veterans, their families, and our communities.

I know many of you may grow tired of hearing about membership, but it remains one of our most critical challenges. Pennsylvania was once the largest department in the VFW and is now second. Many of our members served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, and sadly, we are losing those veterans who helped build our department. It is time we do a better job reaching OIF and OEF veterans.

We understand this will not be easy. We must be proactive and assertive—not sitting back and waiting for veterans to come to us. We are simply asking for one meeting per month to start, while respecting their family and work obligations. As our legislative team often reminds us, numbers matter when advocating for veterans in Washington and Harrisburg. We must think creatively.

Finally, to our District Commanders: thank you for your dedication, hard work, and unwavering support of our department and our members. Without your assistance, the role of Commander would be far more difficult.

As I conclude my first six months as Commander, I am proud to have traveled across Pennsylvania and witnessed the incredible work you do. I have had the privilege of meeting with our Attorney General, 3 state and federal legislators, and the LCB—advocating against taxes on games at our posts, addressing concerns with social memberships overtaking posts, helping pass the Major Richard Star Act, improving gaming laws, and much more. When my year as Commander comes to a close, that work will not stop.

STATE SR. VICE COMMANDER



JIM BROWN
STATE SR. VICE COMMANDER

Sisters and Brothers,

As we wind down the 2025-2026 year, I want to thank you all for your service, dedication, support, and advice. I especially want to thank Commander Roland for his guidance and Jr. Vice Commander Owen for his continued support in moving the VFW Department of PA forward.

Let us reflect on the past year and continue to learn from each day. We do this together, as those who teach must be willing to learn, and those who learn must be willing to teach. Rather than dwelling on the past, let us use our experiences to understand what the VFW means to each of us. From there, we must focus on how to mentor others. Without proper mentorship, issues take root that distract us from our mission of looking out for one another.

I urge you to understand our National, Department, and Post Bylaws. Please use them as tools and do not misinterpret or misuse them. When issues arise, I ask that you make every attempt to resolve them at the lowest level possible.

While our membership is holding strong, we must continue to grow. This is the responsibility of every member. Recruiting is not a one-size-fits-all strategy, and retention is of the utmost importance. We invest significant time and money into recruiting, but we must improve how we keep those members engaged. As we finish Commander Roland's year strong, let's use that momentum to plan future events and membership drives across every season in Pennsylvania.

Thank you again. It has been a great privilege to represent you as your VFW Department of PA Sr. Vice Commander for 2025-2026. If you grant me the honor this June, I would be proud to serve as your VFW Department of PA Commander for 2026-2027.

IGNITE, UNITE, AND PUSH FORWARD

STATE JR. VICE COMMANDER



GLENN OWEN
STATE JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER

I can hardly believe my year as Junior Vice Commander is already halfway over. It has been a busy and deeply rewarding journey visiting districts and posts across the state on behalf of Commander Roland. Everywhere I go, I'm continually impressed by the dedication and hard work our members put forth in support of our veterans, their families, and our communities.

Our strength as an organization comes directly from our membership. As of February 1, we have surpassed 95 percent in membership—an outstanding accomplishment. However, our work does not stop here. To continue growing, we must not only recruit new members but also reconnect with former members and understand why they chose not to renew. By identifying the reasons behind these decisions, we can make meaningful changes to ensure we don't lose valuable members in the future.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to all the students who participated in this year's Voice of Democracy essay competition. Congratulations to all our District winners, and best of luck to our State Winner, **Kelsey Persons** from District 17, Post 6631. Additionally, congratulations to our Patriot's Pen State Winner, **Casseim Small** from District 21, Post 8955.

A special thank you goes to VOD Chairman **Vincent Gavin**, Auxiliary Scholarship Chairman **Karen Mooney**, Patriot's Pen Chairman **William Lamond**, and the VFW and Auxiliary staff for organizing an exceptional program at the Mid-Winter Conference. I hope everyone who attended left with new knowledge and resources to bring back to their districts and posts. It is crucial that the information shared during this conference is carried forward so everyone

STATE ADJUTANT/QUARTERMASTER



JOHN B. GETZ, JR.
STATE QUARTERMASTER

Comrades, As we prepare for the upcoming nomination of our new officers for the Posts in Pennsylvania, I want to remind everyone that March is only a month away. Please ensure that all positions are filled during the nomination process. When April arrives and elections are completed, make sure to visit the National site and enter your elected officers into the National system. This must be done in April as soon as your elections are finalized.

The responsibility for submitting this information falls to the Quartermaster—please remember that this is part of the Quartermaster's duties. Even if all positions are not filled at the time of election, you must still complete the election report and submit it to National. Following this process supports your Post, your District, the Department, and National. The job is not complete until the paperwork is submitted.

I want to thank each of you for your hard work throughout the year. It takes all of us working together to keep the Veterans of Foreign Wars the strong organization it has always been. We are the ones who went to war so our nation could remain free. Continue the great work, stay united, and let us keep striving to improve the lives of all veterans and strengthen our communities.

remains informed on updates to our By Laws and State and National regulations.

As I've stated previously, one of my goals as I advance through the chairs is to help veterans and VFW Posts access grants that support both our mission and our facilities. One example is the **National VFW Post Assistance Grant**.

This grant is available exclusively to VFW Posts to help offset expenses related to building repairs or equipment that enhances a post's ability to serve veterans and the community. Only VFW Posts are eligible—Auxiliaries, Districts, Departments, and other subordinate organizations may not apply. Posts may receive up to **\$2,500** in reimbursement for qualifying projects, with a minimum request of **\$500**. Applicants may receive this grant once every three years, with 2023–24 being the inaugural year. All applications must be submitted through the Dashboard.

For more information on this and other available grants, please visit **VFW.org**.

VFW Voices of Service Stories in Action



The VFW is gathering real stories from veterans and military families. These experiences help show how decisions made in Washington affect real lives.

Scan the QR code to share your story.



Share Your Story. Shape the Future.

STATE JUDGE ADVOCATE



FRANK MCGOVERN
STATE JUDGE ADVOCATE

In 2022, Governor Wolf signed Act 122 of 2022, which created new reporting requirements for Pennsylvania business entities. All business entities in Pennsylvania (including limited liability companies, limited partnerships, and corporations) are required to file an annual report. The long-time decennial report requirement has been repealed. Similar again to other states, failure to file the Annual Report will subject the association to administrative dissolution/termination/cancellation and loss of the protection of its name. The report can be filed online at the below address.

<https://file.dos.pa.gov/>

The Department of State will mail notice to the registered office address of each association required to make an Annual Report at least two months prior to the respective deadline, reminding it of the need to make an Annual Report. It is critical that affected associations keep all information on file with the Department up-to-date, particularly registered office address, to ensure that they receive notice of how and when to make Annual Reports. Associations also have the ability to provide emails for additional notifications, when filing any association form online or by using the Manage Notifications icon. However, failure by the Department to deliver notice to any party, or failure by any party to receive notice, of an Annual Report filing requirement does not relieve the association of the obligation to make the Annual Report filing.

While the reporting requirement has become active in 2025, enforcement of the requirement will not begin until 2027. Failure to file the annual report could result in the dissolution, termination, or cancellation of the business entity, bringing Pennsylvania in line with neighboring states. During the time of administrative dissolution/termination/cancellation, the association's name (domestic or foreign) is made available to any other filing association. If another association has taken the name of the senior association seeking

reinstatement, the association that has appropriated the name may keep the name and the senior association seeking reinstatement (in the case of domestic entities) or reregistration (in the case of foreign registrations) must choose a new name.

The fee is \$7 for business corporations, limited liability companies (LLCs), limited partnerships (LPs) and limited liability general partnerships (LLPs). There is no fee for nonprofit corporations and any LPs or LLCs with a not-for-profit purpose.

For all corporations (business and nonprofit, domestic and foreign), the deadline is June 30 of each year. The deadline for limited liability companies (domestic and foreign) is September 30, and the annual report of any other domestic filing entity or foreign filing association is due on or before December 31 of each year.

- Corporations (business and nonprofit) domestic and foreign - **Jan. 1 - Jun. 30**
- Limited liability companies domestic and foreign - **Jan. 1 - Sept. 30**
- All other associations (limited partnerships, limited liability partnerships, business trusts, professional associations) domestic and foreign - **Jan. 1 - Dec. 3**

More information can be found at:

[Dos.pa.gov/AnnualReports](https://dos.pa.gov/AnnualReports) or call 717-787-1057

STATE CHAPLAIN



DAVID BRADY
STATE CHAPLAIN

I asked myself a question today as we lead into the Dorchester Four Chaplains Day, February 3rd (1943): How can VFW Chaplains exemplify the values of the Four Navy Chaplains from the USS Dorchester? I come up with 4 values with action steps we can do as VFW Chaplains: The first is Service Before Self. The Four Chaplains didn't preach sacrifice, they lived it. VFW chaplains can do the same in daily acts of service. We can put the needs of veterans and families first, especially the quiet ones who don't ask for help. We can also advocate for struggling veterans even when it's inconvenient or unseen. The second is Interfaith Respect and Unity. As VFW Chaplains we serve all veterans, regardless of religion, spirituality, or lack thereof and create space for meaning, hope, and remembrance without imposing beliefs. The Dorchester Chaplains proved unity that doesn't require sameness. Third, VFW Chaplains are the

Calm Presence in Crisis. We are the grounding presence during grief, PTSD episodes, suicide prevention efforts, or community tragedies. We should listen more than speak and offer reassurance, not platitudes. On a sinking ship, the chaplains brought peace. Lastly, VFW Chaplains Share the Burden and Share the Hope. We walk alongside veterans dealing with loss, survivor's guilt, aging, or identity after service. We help them remember they are not alone and still part of something meaningful. We also honor the fallen while reaffirming the value of those still here. VFW Chaplains honor the Dorchester Chaplains not by trying to replicate their final moment, but by embodying these four values. Dorchester-Level Chaplaincy is being right where veterans need it most.

NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBER



NATE SMITH
NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBER

Greetings Comrades.

I hope everyone had a nice holiday and is staying warm with the inclement weather conditions lately. A lot has been going on since my last article. We had the Eastern States Conference, Oct. 24th - Oct. 26th, Commander Roland's Testimonial weekend, Oct. 31st – Nov. 2nd, and just recently a great Mid-Winter Conference where we had Pennsylvania Attorney General David Sunday and VFW National Inspector General Chris Haynes as our guest speakers. Also attending was our VFW Auxiliary National Vice President Donna Mills. We received training on Suicide Awareness by our State Surgeon Jesse Olson along with Mr. John Lucas Suicide Prevention Coordinator from Lebanon County VA Hospital.

We also had the privilege of honoring our 1st Place State Patriot's Pen winner and finalists from each District for the Voice of Democracy contests. I want to congratulate our state winner for the Patriot's Pen program, Cassiem Small, sponsored by Post 8951 District #21, and all the district winners. I also want to congratulate our State 1st Place Voice Of Democracy winner, Kelsey S. Persons, sponsored by District #18/Post 6631. She will now compete with the finalists from each department at the national level.

Our Membership is currently at 95%, and we are on track to reach our goal of 101% by April 30, 2026. District Commanders, please reach out to your Post Commanders to have their unpaid members pay their annual dues or help those in distress by paying their dues with the money in the post relief fund. Also, we have our Washington Conference coming up in March, and the top priority is to have Congress pass the Major Richard Star Act. (S.1032/H.R.2102). Please sign up for VFW Action Corps and have your members and families do the same.

In closing, I want to say, thank you for your service, along with your dedication to this great organization. God bless you, our troops and this great nation.

MISSION READY

VFW BENEFITS ADVISOR TRAINING (ZOOM SERIES)

Open to ALL VFW & Auxiliary Members

3rd Wednesday of each month • 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM (ET) • via Zoom

2026 Training Schedule

Date	Topic
March 18, 2026	VA Healthcare
April 15, 2026	VetConnect / PA Vet Connection
May 20, 2026	Survivor Benefits
June 17, 2026	No Training – Claims Clinic at Department Convention

Get the Zoom Link

Email: pavfwdso@gmail.com • Info: vfwpa.org

BRING A QUESTION. LEAVE WITH AN ACTION PLAN.

Train • Share • Execute • Take care of our veterans

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN



REV. PETER R. HOOK
NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

A Guide to Offering Meaningful Support to Someone in Crisis

In the aftermath of a crisis—such as the death of a loved one—families often hear well-meaning, but ultimately hollow phrases like, “Let me know if you need anything,” or “If there’s anything I can do, just ask.” Though intended to express care, these words frequently fall flat and offer little real comfort. The typical response is a polite, “No, we’re okay,” not because help isn’t needed, but because the offer lacks specificity and places the burden on those already overwhelmed. In moments of grief or acute stress, it’s difficult to identify what needs to be done—let alone delegate tasks to someone who may not know how to help without intruding. Asking how you can help may sound thoughtful, but it’s passive; it shifts the responsibility away from the supporter and onto the person in crisis.

Genuine support requires more than kind intentions. It calls for **keen observation**, a **specific offer**, and a **respectful confirmation** that your help aligns with their needs and boundaries.

Keen Observation: Seeing What’s Really Needed

Genuine support begins with listening and paying close attention—not just to what is said, but to what is unsaid. Keen observation means noticing the everyday things that may be falling through the cracks, as well as the subtle signs of emotional strain. It’s about tuning in to the emotional and practical realities of someone’s situation.

Here’s what “keen observation” looks like in real-life situations:

Being present without pressure

Sometimes, just showing up, without expectations or demands, can be the most powerful form of support. Sitting quietly, listening, or simply being nearby can communicate care without requiring emotional energy from the person in crisis.

Reading emotional cues

Someone may say they’re “fine,” but their body language, tone, or silence might tell a different story. Keen observation means listening beyond words and recognizing when someone is overwhelmed or emotionally exhausted.

Noticing the small things

Has the family had a nourishing meal recently? Is the mail piling up? Does the lawn need attention? These small signs can indicate that daily responsibilities are beginning to build up and help with everyday tasks may be welcomed. You are noticing—not diagnosing or judging.

Understanding context

If you know the person has children, pets, or elderly parents to care for, consider what responsibilities might be slipping through the cracks. You don’t need to ask—they likely won’t think to tell you. Instead, offer help with something specific you know is part of their daily life.

Keen observation is not about being intrusive—it’s about being attuned. It allows you to offer help that’s timely, relevant, and respectful. When you observe thoughtfully, you’re better equipped to make a specific offer that truly meets a need.

Making a Specific Offer: Turning Awareness into Action

Once you’ve observed what might be needed, the next step is to act specifically. A vague “Let me know if you need anything” puts the responsibility back on the person in crisis. A focused, specific offer, on the other hand, shows initiative and makes it easier for them to accept help without added stress.

Here’s how to make a specific offer that feels supportive rather than intrusive:

Be clear and direct

Instead of asking, “Do you need help with meals?” say, “I’d like to drop off dinner on Wednesday or Thursday. Would something homemade, like pasta or soup, be better for your family, or would they prefer takeout?” This removes ambiguity and makes it easier for them to accept your offer. When taking meals to a family, always use disposable containers to avoid the added burden of returning dishes.

Offer something you know they need

If you’ve noticed the lawn hasn’t been mowed offer to do it. “Is it okay if I swing by tomorrow and take care of the yard? No need to be home.”

Make it easy to accept

Frame your offer in a way that doesn’t require planning or negotiation. For example: “I’m heading to the grocery store. May I pick up some essentials for you? Maybe milk, bread, or fruit?”

Follow through

A specific offer is only meaningful if it’s carried out. If you commit to helping, then follow through.

Gentle, respectful, specific offers show that you’ve paid attention, that you care, and that you’re actually willing to take action. Your offer relieves the person in crisis from the mental load of decision-making, and that’s one of the most compassionate things you can do. Remember, you are offering, not insisting.

A Respectful Confirmation: Aligning Support with Their Needs and Boundaries

Even the most thoughtful and specific offer of help needs one final ingredient: respect for the person’s

needs and boundaries. In times of crisis, people may feel vulnerable, protective of their space and privacy, or simply not ready to accept help. That’s why gently confirming that your offer is actually helpful, and welcome, is just as important as making it.

Here’s how to do that with care:

Ask, don’t assume

Even if you’ve observed a need, check in before acting: “Would it be okay with you if I took care of your lawn this week?” This shows respect and gives them control over what kind of help they accept.

Offer with flexibility

Let them know your offer is open-ended: “I would like to drop off dinner one night this week. Is that good for you, or is there a better time?” This allows them to say yes, no, or suggest an alternative without feeling awkward.

Be mindful of emotional boundaries

Some people may not want company, conversation, or even acknowledgment of their grief at certain moments. Respect their cues. A simple message like, “Thinking of you” can be comforting without being intrusive.

Accept their response gracefully

If they decline your offer, don’t take it personally or push back. Instead, reassure them: “no problem—just know. I’m here if anything changes.” This keeps the door open without adding pressure.

Keep showing up

Boundaries may shift over time. Someone who declines help today may welcome it next week. Respectful confirmation ensures that your support is not only helpful, but also welcomed. It honors the person’s autonomy and emotional state, reinforcing that your care is genuine and unconditional.

Conclusion: The Power of Thoughtful Support

Supporting someone in crisis is not about finding the perfect words—it’s about showing up with intention, awareness, and care. Genuine, meaningful support goes beyond kind gestures and well-meaning phrases. It begins with **keen observation**: noticing what’s needed without being asked. It continues with a **specific offer**: taking initiative to meet a real need. And it’s completed with **respectful confirmation**: ensuring your help is welcomed and aligns with their boundaries.

When we approach “support” this way, we shift from passive sympathy to active compassion— and that’s not only meaningful support, but genuine friendship.

With compassion and care.

JIM BROWN, CANDIDATE FOR THE HIGH OFFICE OF VFW DEPT OF PA COMMANDER



IGNITE, UNITE, AND PUSH FORWARD

GLENN OWEN, CANDIDATE FOR STATE SR. VICE COMMANDER



For those of you who may not know me, my name is Glenn Owen, and I currently have the honor of serving as your State Junior Vice Commander. Today, I am asking for your support as I seek the position of State Senior Vice Commander for the Department of Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars for the 2026–2027 term.

Over the past year, I have traveled across our great state, meeting with districts and posts, listening to our members' concerns, ideas, and goals. These conversations have reinforced my belief in the strength of our organization and the dedication of our veterans and auxiliary members.

As your State Senior Vice Commander, I will continue to work closely with our State Commander to address the issues brought forward by our membership and to advocate for initiatives that support the continued growth and success of the Veterans of Foreign Wars here in Pennsylvania. Together, we will build on the progress we've made and ensure that our organization remains strong, unified, and mission focused.

JESSICA KING, CANDIDATE FOR DEPARTMENT JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER



Jessica King, Post Commander of VFW Post 8430 in East McKeesport and current Department Service Officer (DSO) for the Department of Pennsylvania, has officially announced her candidacy for Department Junior Vice Commander.

A proud Marine, King earned her eligibility for membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars through her service in the United States Marine Corps, including deployment to Iraq in 2003.

Comrade King brings a proven record of leadership, service, and dedication to veterans, their families, and the mission of the VFW. As Post Commander, she has led VFW Post 8430 to continued growth,

increased community engagement, and strong participation in VFW programs, earning recognition at the district and department levels. Her leadership has emphasized teamwork, transparency, and building a welcoming environment for veterans of all eras.

In her role as Department Service Officer, King oversees and supports a statewide network of VFW Benefits Advisors, assisting thousands of veterans and family members with VA claims, benefits counseling, and advocacy.

Under her leadership, the program has focused on accountability, training, and outreach—ensuring veterans receive accurate information and timely assistance. She has been a strong advocate for Intent to File compliance, VA healthcare enrollment, and collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Comrade King is deeply committed to strengthening the future of the VFW. Her priorities include supporting posts and districts, mentoring emerging leaders, expanding veteran outreach, and encouraging participation from younger and recently separated veterans. She believes in meeting veterans where they are—through community events, social media engagement, and partnerships—while preserving the VFW's core values and traditions.

Beyond her department roles, King remains actively involved in community service initiatives, fundraising efforts, and veteran-focused programs that directly impact local communities. She is known for her hands-on leadership style and her belief that the strength of the VFW lies in empowered posts, informed members, and united leadership.

“I am running for Department Junior Vice Commander to serve, support, and help build a strong foundation for the future of the VFW in Pennsylvania,” King said. “Together, we can continue to advocate for veterans, develop leaders, and ensure our organization remains relevant and impactful for generations to come.”

Jessica King respectfully asks for the support of the comrades of the Department of Pennsylvania as she seeks election to Department Junior Vice Commander.

ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA

"A MOMENT IN TIME" UNVEILING THE PAINTING OF THE BATTLE OF HUE, VIETNAM



The framed painting of "A Moment in Time" based on Bob Lauer's personal recollection at the Nguyen Hoang bridge over the Perfume River during the TET Offensive in Hue, Vietnam.

The framed print of "A Moment in Time" was unveiled by Bob Lauer, Post Commander Harold Aucker, Bob Bressler, and Quartermaster Bill Sankey. The print was donated and is now hanging in the Social Hall of Selinsgrove VFW Post 6631.

The framed painting of "A Moment in Time" is based on Bob Lauer's personal recollection of the Nguyen Hoang bridge over the Perfume River during the TET Offensive in Hue, Vietnam.

On Nov. 11, 2025 (Veterans Day), Bob Lauer gave a presentation and slide show of his personal account of the first day of battle in Hue (pronounced Way) City in Vietnam on Jan. 31, 1968. "The Moment in Time" painting was based on Lauer's experience at 4:30 p.m. that day.

Lauer described the events of a day which had started at 2:00 a.m. with a rocket and mortar barrage and led to his squad, aboard a Quad Fifty Machine gun truck, providing support for two companies of Marines from the 1st Marine Division, Alpha 1/1 and Golf 2/5, about 350 men, into Hue. During the presentation, Lauer described the background events leading up to the moment captured in the painting. He also pointed out that Hue City was the third largest city in Vietnam, a thriving and beautiful city with 140,000 inhabitants. He noted that the troops were not trained for urban combat only jungle fighting.

According to Lauer, "I had been in Vietnam for 15 months on the afternoon of Jan. 30, 1968. Since

September of 1967, my time had been served as squad leader and acting section chief with Battery G, 65th Artillery, a 'Quad 50' unit. A Quad 50 is an air defense gun turret with four .50-caliber machine guns and a gunner that sits in between them. They were deployed on the ground or mounted on trucks to protect convoys."

As the combined forces started to move north toward Hue, Lauer recalled one of the haunting sights. "Facing us, at the edge of a small bridge, was an ARVN tank with the commander appearing to be standing in the hatch on the front deck, but it didn't look right. We then realized that a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) had hit the tank, cut the tank commander in two, and blown the torso to the middle of the deck where it stayed."

He also relayed several other scenes from that day. "Incoming enemy fire intensified, and we were asked to direct fire at a multi-story building to the right side of the road. As we poured several hundred rounds into the building, there was a sudden break by several NVA soldiers across an open area to the rear of the structure. Open targets!"

There were also some humorous ones as well. "During that day of sheer terror and pumping adrenaline, strange memories can be retained. I remember a Marine going into a building firing repeatedly and suddenly reappearing with a case of warm beer."

During the presentation, Bob and Susan Lauer unveiled the originally commissioned painting. Bob continued to reference the painting as he finished his talk. "The Quads and Dusters were positioned at the base of the Nguyen Hoang Bridge and ordered to fire across the Perfume River in support of Marines from Golf Company, 2-5, 1st Marine Division, now advancing to the north side of the bridge... The NVA had allowed the Marines to cross the length of the bridge before opening up with automatic weapons, recoilless rifles, and RPGs. Dead and injured Marines lay on the bridge."

Lauer continued, "My Quad 50 was providing cover fire from across the river when a Marine officer came up to me and asked, 'Sarge, my men are getting the hell shot out of them, can you help them out?' I looked at the other guys on the truck (Harris, David, the gunner, and David the driver), and they looked at me and shrugged. There was never any thought to say 'No,' but I think that each of us told ourselves that we weren't going to make it back from this one. I said "Let's Go".

Lauer and his men pulled the Quad truck onto the bridge and drove toward the Citadel on the north end. "There were dead and wounded Marines along both edges of the bridge's deck. Men were using the bodies of their dead buddies as cover so they could continue to put return fire on the enemy. Marines were yelling at us as we drove across to try to tell us where to direct our fire. The incoming fire was intense."

At one point, Lauer saw an NVA soldier at the corner of a sandbagged bunker holding a grenade. He yelled "grenade!" and they all jumped off the truck and took cover beneath the truck bed. Fortunately, it was a dud. "We climbed back into the truck and the gunner Davis, immediately started firing at trench lines that were in the park

continued on page 9



The framed print of "A Moment in Time" was unveiled by Bob Lauer, Post Commander Harold Aucker, Bob Bressler, and Quartermaster Bill Sankey. The print was donated and is now hanging in the Social Hall of Selinsgrove VFW Post.

ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA

"A MOMENT IN TIME" UNVEILING THE PAINTING OF THE BATTLE OF HUE, VIETNAM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

to our left. With all the noise of the guns, I had to beat him on the helmet and physically turn his head to bring him around to fire on the bunker... When we stopped Strike fir by Kay Poething the bunker was just a pile of sand." "

PFC Harris and I got off the truck while the driver turned the truck around. A Marine taking cover beside Harris was shot in the head and instantly killed. As the Quad truck drew even with us, we loaded the Marine in and started back across the bridge, picking up dead as we went."

The city had been attacked by a force of approximately 8,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong the previous night. 8 hours of intense house-to-house combat led to the "Moment in Time" at the Nguyen Hoang bridge over the Perfume River.

Lauver (standing on the left) and two of the Marines depicted in the painting were awarded Silver Stars because of their actions on this day. Lauver also earned his second Purple Heart. If anyone would like to read the entire personal account of that day, search Google for "Quad 50s at Hue" by Bob Lauver.

After carefully searching for an artist, Bob discovered Ana Truqui Arnabar. He decided that she would be the perfect person to bring his memory to life. From Bob's descriptions of the battle, endless research, and many revisions by the artist to realistically depict this Moment in Time, Ana Truqui Arnabar worked months to complete the commissioned painting. She worked tirelessly to portray the helmets, guns, and scene accurately. "You know I will forever be thankful that you picked me for such a great honor. It has been a true pleasure," stated Truqui Anabar.

A painting of "A Moment in Time" will be delivered to Snow Hall at Fort Sill, OK in early 2026. It was signed by the Marines on the bridge and Gen. Pete Pace, Chair Joint Chief of Staff. The dedication plaque reads, "A Moment in Time' 16:30 hrs. 31 January 1968 Hue, Vietnam; Bob Lauver, 'Quad Fifties,' G Battery, 65th Artillery; Dedicated to the Marines of Alpha 1/1 and Golf 2/5 who fought and died on this day; Artist, Ana Truqui."

If anyone is interested in purchasing a print or framed print of "A Moment in Time," please contact Bob Lauver at rhlauver@juno.com.



Officers of VFW Media Post 3460 delivered socks, hats and gloves collected by Dept of PA VFW to the Crescenz VA Medical Center in Philadelphia.

L to R: QM Mike Devenny, Trustee Dave Pastuszek, VA Volunteer Tony Chavez and Supervisor Theresa Heard.



Mahoning Valley VFW Post 2076 in Punxsutawney had the honor of presenting the American flag daily for three days of the 15th annual Minktoberfest. The event draws over 200 of the country's elite trappers from Alaska to Maine. Organized and hosted by Don Powell and his wife Candi, Minktoberfest is held near Punxsutawney on their property which seems to have been designed for the event. The multi-day event features everything from trap setting demonstrations to building canoes to demonstrating how to make clothing from animal pelts and much more. This year the Powells wanted to add a little bit of patriotic flavor to the event, so they asked VFW Post 2076 to help out. Post members were happy to oblige.

Pictured in the front row to the right of center are Post 2076 Quartermaster Bob Lott, Trustee Charlie Smith, Chaplain Tim "Tut" Brady, and Junior Vice Commander Duane Miller. To the left of front center in the white shirt is Don Powell with his wife Candi.

Photo is courtesy of Ken Diem of K&K Photography.

SAFE WINTER DRIVING

By Brian T Delaney, Safety Chairman

The weather has a habit of changing pretty quickly, especially during the winter season. Powerful winter storms driven by jet streams that often exceed 200 mph can bring copious amounts of snow and ice, along with blowing snow and whiteout conditions. In some cases, the temperature can drop over 50 degrees in a matter of hours. If travelers don't check the weather forecast and plan accordingly, these fast-changing conditions can be a matter of life or death when we are on the road.

Being aware of the weather conditions when traveling is crucial to ensuring a safe journey. According to the Department of Transportation, each year 24 percent of weather-related vehicle crashes occur on snowy, slushy, or icy pavement and 15 percent happen during snowfall or sleet. Over 1,300 people are killed and more than 116,800 people are injured in vehicle crashes on snowy, slushy, or icy pavement annually.

Check the road conditions along your route: Weather conditions often change quickly when you travel through locations with varying landscapes. Be sure to check the current road conditions and updated alerts or advisories for the roads and highways you will be traveling on. This site contains a comprehensive list of current road conditions listed by state.

Stay mobile in your mobile: Having access to the most up-to-date weather warnings and advisory information is now easier than ever. Wherever you are, you can get the local weather forecast from the National Weather Service with one click on your home screen by visiting mobile.weather.gov and bookmark it to your phone. Make sure that you have the latest weather news and information on the go so you can stay on top of fast-changing winter weather conditions.



What's more, fast-changing weather conditions can be particularly dangerous. Just last year alone, whiteout conditions created by quickly developing snow squalls caused over 140 accidents and 3 fatalities in Indiana, Pennsylvania and New Hampshire.

Of course, there are several steps you can take to avoid being caught unaware on the road in a hazardous winter event.

Utilize your local National Weather Service office: Fast-changing weather conditions happen just as described – fast! Just because it's sunny and clear when you depart doesn't mean it will stay that way for the duration of your trip. Make sure to check the hourly conditions at your local NWS office.

Winterize your vehicle: No one likes encountering car problems at any point during the year. But fast-changing and harsh winter conditions can be particularly brutal on your vehicle. Take a look at this checklist provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for some tips on preparing your car for the winter.

Have a winter weather emergency kit: Like your mother always said, "It's better to be safe than sorry". Even with full preparation, surprises are bound to happen with weather conditions. Make sure Mother Nature doesn't catch you off guard by having some basic winter weather tools packed in your car at all times.



THE SHARKS

We define a "Claim Shark" as anyone who:

- **Charges hefty fees** to "guide, assist, advise or consult" veterans with filing or appealing their VA benefit claims — this practice is illegal!
- Asserts they are an "expert" or "guardian" but **evades the professional and ethical standards of VA accreditation** — their advice can be misleading or even fraudulent!
- **Hooks you** — once you're in, you can't get out and may be subject to new and hidden fees whenever you get a new rating — no matter who does the work!

Some of their predatory practices include:

- Claiming they are an "insider" or have inside information to fast track or maximize your VA disability rating.
- Touting better outcomes because you are paying for services.
- Advertising faster VA claims decisions.
- Requesting login credentials to access sensitive personal information through government websites like VA.gov.
- Using confusing tactics or ambiguous language to mislead claimants or coerce them into signing a contract.
- Telling veterans to forego VA exams and offering health consultations within their own network of doctors.

Here is how veterans can help protect themselves:

- Always ask "**Are you accredited with VA?**"
- Insist on signing a VA Power of Attorney before agreeing to any other terms and conditions.
- Refuse to sign legal waivers of your right to accredited representation.
- Never agree to contingent payments based on your future benefits.
- Avoid medical exams or opinions from doctors affiliated with consultation companies.
- Always attend exams ordered by VA.
- Never provide access to private and secure systems or personal information.
- Always ask "**If I have to appeal VA's decision, will you still help me?**"

Who is **NOT** a Claim Shark?

- VA accredited veterans service organization representatives, like VFW's Accredited Service Officers.
- Private VA accredited agents.
- VA accredited attorneys, to include pro bono law clinics.
- All those who turn up here when searched:
www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation.



Who are the Claim Sharks?

We used to list the usual Claim Sharks, but it began reading like a phone book. By this point you know the type — all charm up front, hidden fees in the back.

For free, accredited help from VFW's Accredited Service Officers visit
www.DontFeedTheSharks.org

DISTRICT MEETINGS

MARCH 2026

DIST. #	Place of Meeting	Date	Time
1	VFW Post #7650 – Philadelphia	03/11/2026	7:30 PM
7	VFW Post #6613 – Aston-Lenni	03/18/2026	7:00 PM
9	VFW Post #1564 – Phoenixville	03/08/2026	2:00 PM
10	VFW Post #5207 – Daleville	03/08/2026	2:00 PM
11	VFW Post #6615 – White Haven	03/15/2026	2:30 PM
14	VFW Post #5624 – Montrose	03/15/2026	2:00 PM
15	VFW Post #6753 – Knoxville	03/15/2026	2:00 PM
16	VFW Post #32 – Lansdale	03/18/2026	7:00 PM
21	VFW Post #8951 – West York	03/08/2026	2:00 PM
22	VFW Post #8269 – Howard	03/15/2026	2:30 PM
23	VFW Post #4795 – Windber	03/15/2026	2:00 PM
25	VFW Post #8805 – Aliquippa	03/15/2026	2:00 PM
27	VFW Post #92 – Lower Burrell	03/08/2026	2:30 PM
28	VFW Post #169 – Venango	03/08/2026	2:00 PM

APRIL 2026

DIST. #	Place of Meeting	Date	Time
1	VFW Post #20 – Philadelphia	04/08/2026	7:30 PM
7	VFW Post #928 – Folsom	04/15/2026	7:00 PM
14	VFW Post #1568 – Towanda	04/19/2026	2:00 PM
16	VFW Post #6341 – Royersford	04/15/2026	7:00 PM

DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT'S TESTIMONIAL

April 10-12, 2026

Wyndham Garden York

2000 Loucks Road
York, PA 17408

EVERY DAY IS
VETERANS DAY

A graphic featuring the text "EVERY DAY IS VETERANS DAY" in a stylized font. The letters are filled with a red, white, and blue pattern. A silver dog tag is attached to the letter "A" in "DAY" of the second line, hanging down from the top line.

DEADLINE FOR ROOM RESERVATIONS: MARCH 10, 2026

717-846-9500

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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Mechanicsburg Veterans Center

Thurs: 8:30-4:00

Harrisburg: Monday-Friday-8:30-4:00

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THE VFW AUXILIARY



ROBIN KOHLER
PRESIDENT
DEPARTMENT OF PA VFW AUXILIARY

Comrades,

As we reflect on the first half of this year, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to all our veterans across the state. Your dedication, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment to service continues to inspire everything we do within the Auxiliary. Each interaction, whether at meetings, celebrations, ceremonies, or community events, reminds me why our mission is so meaningful, affirming that **Every Day is Veterans Day**.

Thank you for the extraordinary hospitality you've shown during my visits across the state. Every stop has been met with warm welcomes, thoughtful conversations, and genuine camaraderie. You've opened your posts and your hearts, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to share this journey with everyone.

As we move into the second half of the year, I am excited for what lies ahead. We will continue strengthening our programs, supporting our Posts, and uplifting the veterans and families we are here to serve. The momentum is strong, and I am confident we will finish the year even stronger than we began.

The Auxiliary is also fully committed to supporting Commander Roland in reaching his membership goals, despite his requirement to have me jump out of a perfectly good airplane! While I may want to keep my feet firmly on the ground, our Auxiliary members are absolutely ready to rise to the challenge and see this come to fruition. Membership remains at the heart of our collective missions, and I know that by working together, we can help Commander Roland soar past his targets and torture me along the way.

Thank you again for your kindness, your encouragement, and your steadfast support. It is an honor to serve alongside you. I look forward to seeing everyone as I continue my travels and advance our work throughout the remainder of the year.

ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA

DISTRICT 21 - JOHN A BRENNER MEMORIAL DIABETES WALK - SEPTEMBER 26 - 28, 2025



The District 21 John A Brenner Memorial Diabetes Walk - held Sept. 26 - 28, 2025. The District Walk Team visited each of the 17 posts in York, Franklin and Adams counties. A total of \$24,151.25 was collected over the three-day walk from the 17 posts and auxiliaries. A check from the Department of PA was presented to the National Diabetes Association in the amount of \$26,438.51, which included donations collected by other posts and auxiliaries across the state.



District 21 Walk Team was recognized at the Mid-Winter Conference for their dedication to fighting diabetes and working hard to include all members in District 21 to actively help.

Confirmation was received that our \$24,151.25 was matched by a private individual.

**SAVE
THE DATE**

Auxiliary President's Testimony

April 10-11, 2026

State Convention-Pittsburgh

June 17-20, 2026

Flying Squadron (INVITE ONLY)

Penn Stater, State College
July 10 (night) & 11(morning), 2026

POST TRAINING INSTITUTE 2026-2027

PTI #1 (Night)

July 11, 2026

Post 6631 Selingsgrove
4 p.m. Light Finger Foods
5 p.m. Training Starts

PTI #2 (Morning)

July 12, 2026

Post 8488 Kingsley
8 a.m. coffee/donuts
9 a.m. Training Starts
Noon Light Lunch

PTI #3 (Night)

July 12, 2026

Post 106 West Chester
5 p.m. Light Finger Foods
6 p.m. Training Starts

PTI #4 (Night)

July 13, 2026

Post 7415 New Cumberland
5 p.m. Light Finger Foods
6 p.m. Training Starts

PTI #5 (Morning)

July 18, 2026

Post 1132 Kane
8 a.m. coffee/donuts
9 a.m. Training Starts
Noon Light Lunch

PTI #6 (Night)

July 18, 2026

Post 5958 Titusville
4 p.m. Light Finger Foods
5 p.m. Training Starts

PTI #7 (Morning)

July 19, 2026

Post 128 Rochester
8 a.m. coffee/donuts
9 a.m. Training Starts
Noon Light Lunch

PTI #8 (Night)

July 19, 2026

Post 781 Irwin
5 p.m. Light Finger Foods
6 p.m. Training Starts

PTI #9 (Night)

July 20, 2026

Post 1754 Huntingdon
5 p.m. Light Finger Foods
6 p.m. Training Starts

PERIODICALS



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

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**"Veterans injured in service
should not be forced to choose
which part of their service counts.**

All of it counts."

— Austin, Army Combat Medic, Afghanistan

Scan the QR Code to tell Congress:
Pass the Major Richard Star Act.

