

**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA
HEADQUARTERS**



BULLETIN

Ocala, Florida

April 2024

**“To Command Is To Serve
Nothing More Nothing Less”**

COMMANDER’S CHALLENGE, KEEP UP THE MOMENTUM!

This year VFW has seen historic growth that we want to continue as we strive for that 102% goal! During the month of April, Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento has laid down a new challenge to our Posts: The Post in each membership division that increases their membership the most from April 1 through April 30 will receive a \$500 award, as well as a special Commander’s Cutlass, engraved with the Post’s name and number to show everyone that you have done the work and **MEET THE CHALLENGE!**

There will only be 11 of these unique swords made. Any Post that has one to display will show the world that they are among the elite! Get out there and recruit, renew, and recover lapsed members and it could be yours! We are on track for a record-setting membership year if everyone continues to do their part and puts forth the extra effort! Let us shatter expectations as we go out to **MEET THE CHALLENGE!**

This contest will compare membership percentages from April 1-30, 2024. Applications and payments processed online before close of business will be credited that day, payments and applications made through the mail will be processed when received. Questions about this or other membership programs can be sent to membership@vfw.org.

MARCH MANIA IS STILL HERE!

It is that time of year when we are all filling out our brackets for the tournaments, but it is also time for the VFW to focus on our own goals for growing our membership!

For the month of March, we have divided our 52 Departments into six divisions based on size. The Department that leads each division at the end of March will receive a special commemorative championship belt and will continue onto our Championship Bracket in April!

In addition, any Department that reaches 97% membership by the end of March will earn a special championship ring to commemorate that glorious achievement!

Division 1	Division 2	Division 3	Division 4	Division 5	Division 6
California	Arizona	Colorado	Alabama	Alaska	Delaware
Florida	Georgia	Europe	Arkansas	Idaho	Hawaii
Illinois	Indiana	Kansas	Connecticut	Maine	New Hampshire
Michigan	Minnesota	Kentucky	Iowa	Mississippi	North Dakota
New York	Missouri	Maryland	Louisiana	Montana	Rhode Island
Ohio	New Jersey	Massachusetts	Oklahoma	Nevada	Utah
Pennsylvania	North Carolina	Nebraska	Oregon	New Mexico	Vermont
Texas	Washington	South Carolina	Pacific Areas	South Dakota	Wyoming
Virginia	Wisconsin	Tennessee	West Virginia		

It is time to make a full-court press and prove that when it comes to making a championship effort for membership, we are all determined to do our best and **MEET THE CHALLENGE!**

DEPARTMENT “102%” INCENTIVE

Any Department that attains 102% in membership by close of business on June 30, 2024, will be entered into a random drawing. The Commander and the Quartermaster for the Department that is selected will each receive:

- A \$2,500 voucher through Veterans Travel Service (VTS) applied toward airfare, accommodations, and transportation for a trip of their own choice.

NEW POST DEVELOPMENT & POST REVITALIZATION DEPARTMENT AWARD

If you have questions about Memstats, Post Query, or if you are trying to charter a Post and you have more than (15) members on a charter application, give me a call, Matt Nute at 816.968.1122. We have many resources available to help you.

New Post Development and Post Revitalization Department Award: For each new Post chartered, and/or revitalized, the Department Quartermaster will receive:

- A \$250 credit from the VFW Store to be used towards necessary materials for the new Post.

For details on this and all other All-American membership incentives view the Commander-in-Chief’s National Membership Program at vfw.org under *Membership Recruiting & Retention*. For any questions or further information, please contact the Membership Department via email at membership@vfw.org or call us at 1.888.564.6839.

UPCOMING TRAINING

Membership Monday training webinar will be on April 8, 2024, at 2:00 PM, CDT, Topic: **Engaging With Your Membership**. We urge you to pass along this information to all who would be interested.

CHECK OUT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE!

Don’t forget to follow us on Facebook to view the latest membership news, Post Shout-Outs, and important resource information throughout the year - facebook.com/VFWmembership/.

LEGACY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

CHECK OUT OUR LEGACY LIFE VIDEO! Go to vfw.org, click on JOIN, and scroll down to Legacy Life Membership and then click on the video. This prestigious program is available to all Life members and is now available in memoriam for past Life members. There are three levels of membership; each offer their own package of exclusive member benefits. Financial contributions to the Legacy Life member program are tax deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.

Enrollment Cost:

Annual Payouts:

<u>Levels</u>	<u>Posts</u>	<u>Departments</u>	<u>National</u>
Gold- \$1,200.00	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$18.00
Silver- \$800.00	\$12.00	\$12.00	\$12.00
Bronze- \$400.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00

What will your Legacy be?

VFW Foundation

Lisa Baronio has resigned as Executive Director of the VFW Foundation. Assistant Adjutant General Brian Walker is now the interim VFW Foundation Executive Director.

The VFW Foundation corporate relations team secured \$32,500 in corporate sponsorships for the Washington Conference. This included gifts from T-Mobile, Oracle Health, Booz Allen Hamilton, and Health Psychology Associates.

Twisted X returned as this year's premier Voice of Democracy sponsor at \$130,000. CEO Prasad Reddy was unable to attend but sent a heartfelt video congratulating the winners and thanking the VFW & VFW Auxiliary members.

The VFW Foundation was awarded a \$75,000 grant from Oracle Giving in support of VFW NVS activities.

Burger King has agreed to shift support of Unmet Needs to National Veterans Service. At a meeting with Chairperson of the Board VFW Foundation Mike DeRosa, and former Executive Director Lisa Baronio, Burger King President Tom Curtis understood how leveraging support from Unmet Needs could assist many more veterans with expansive support.

Contact: VFW Foundation Director of Donor Relations Richard Freiburghouse, rfreiburghouse@vfw.org.

Development

Here is some helpful information about why the support of every VFW member is vitally important. VFW's life-changing programs are not possible through membership dues alone. In fact, **membership dues alone cover just 17% of the cost of programs**. As a nonprofit organization, the VFW relies heavily on the generosity of its members and patriotic supporters. When members donate, 100% of their net donation goes directly back to support their Department. *Please spread the word and give as generously as you are able.*

VFW Special Edition VFW Birthday Cards – Last month the VFW mailed the 2024 Special Edition Birthday Card Assortment and other gifts in recognition of your commitment to the VFW – and to struggling veterans of all generations. Enclosed in that package was a special Thank You card for a veteran or service member. Please sign and return it right away. We will deliver your signed Thank You card to one of America's service members or hospitalized veterans in time for Independence Day, this July 4th. It means so much to them to know their fellow veterans remember and care. This month you may also receive a reminder letter about that special package if you have not had a chance to respond.

The VFW wants to ensure that when our newest veterans – and veterans from all wars and conflicts – turn to us for assistance, we have the programs and assistance available for them. Please send a donation in honor of your fellow veterans who now face a long road to recovery from injuries sustained in battle. Your gift will mean that these programs stay available and strong right in *your* Department.

Memorial Day Campaign – Late this month you may be receiving a package that includes a set of patriotic coasters, four dimes, and a \$1.50 check. These items are simple reminders of how much your generosity means to the VFW and all the veterans we serve. When you return the nickels and check with the most generous gift you can manage, it will mean the VFW will continue to be there to help veterans, service members and their

families, whether it is to help veterans to receive financial grants when times are tough, assist veterans in obtaining the benefits they have earned, or ensure the rights of veterans of every generation are respected and protected. The coasters are a thank you for your continuing support. I also hope that you will join other veterans and military families in displaying the U.S. flag on all patriotic holidays, particularly this upcoming Memorial Day. You can visit heroes.vfw.org/Flag to print a free flag poster to display.

Know the Truth About Wills – Creating a will has never been easier. But there are a few myths about estate planning you should know before you dive in. 1. ‘I’m not rich, I don’t need a will.’ If you own a home, car, or anything else of value, you should have a will. If you do not decide where it goes, the state will. 2. ‘Once I make a will, I can never change it.’ You can change your will whenever you would like. In fact, it is a good idea to update it periodically as your life changes. Read our last three myths at: <https://vfw.planmylegacy.org/will-myths>. If you still have questions, we are happy to help! Contact the VFW Planned Giving Office at 816.968.1119 or plannedgiving@vfw.org today.

Have You Heard About the VFW’s Partners in Patriotism? – Adjutant General Dan West would like you to join with him in supporting the VFW’s life-changing programs for veterans, service members and their families and reduce the amount of mail you receive. The VFW has an option that allows you to support VFW programs on a monthly, quarterly, or yearly basis, as well as reduce expenses and eliminate fundraising mail. It is called Partners in Patriotism. As a member of Partners in Patriotism, you choose a set dollar amount for your donation (minimum amount of \$10) that is either charged to your credit card or set up as an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) from your bank account. Once you join the VFW’s Partners in Patriotism, you will only receive the Quarterly Supporter newsletters to keep you informed of the many efforts your monthly gifts are making possible and a Year-End Tax Receipt mailed by the end of January. If you are interested in joining Partners in Patriotism, you may contact Donor Services in the VFW Development Department toll-free at 1.833.VFW.GIVE (1.833.839.4483) or email us at partners@vfw.org with “Partners in Patriotism Application” in the subject line.

VFW Friends of Freedom – If you are not already a member of the VFW’s online community, please visit vfw.org and look for the gold banner that says “**Find Out What’s Happening**” to sign up. As a member of the VFW’s Friends of Freedom, you will receive special emails with breaking VFW news, legislative alerts, and unique opportunities to help the VFW in assisting our nation’s veterans, service members and their families. You may also visit vfw.org/VFWatWork and click on “**Read VFW success stories**” to learn how the VFW is fighting for veterans’ rights, assisting veterans in need, educating our youth and aiding military families across the nation. Check back often to see newly posted stories!

Department Resources – Many great resources are available for your Department to use in promoting fundraising programs. By visiting heroes.vfw.org/VFWTools, you will find the latest fundraising program information, ideas, and promotional tools from the Development Department. Download ad slicks, ready-to-use articles, and other items for your Department publications and/or website. Recent mailings and mail schedules are also posted on a regular basis. Use the tools found on the VFW Department Resources Page to help strengthen your Department programs. Check it out today!

VFW Communications

Join the 2024 VFW Day of Service.

[VFW Day of Service](#) started out as a way to showcase the great community service efforts of local VFW members, but it quickly became a nationwide movement.

Now in its third year, the VFW's 2024 Day of Service kicks off the first Saturday in May (May 4). But we need you to help make history again! [Signing up](#) is easy and we have plenty of great ideas and free resources to help you execute a meaningful community service event near you.

We want to give a shout-out to our friends in **California, New York, and Texas** for having registered the most Day of Service events so far. Now, we are calling on the rest of the country to ensure we have participation in all 50 states, and especially Kansas, Iowa, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

We know your call to serve is strong and you value gathering with fellow veterans to make a difference. Now is the time to change lives and make an impact. [Sign up for the 2024 VFW Day of Service today.](#)

Veterans & Military Support Programs

2024 VFW Day of Service

Make your state stand out! We are kicking off 2024 VFW Day of Service, a nationwide community service effort, and we are counting on you to help make this year bigger and better. Please visit <https://todaysvfw.org/Day-of-Service/> to learn more, check out helpful tools and resources—and most importantly — sign up!

We are counting on 100% participation and are looking to VFW leaders at every level to make it happen. Thanks for your support!

Veterans & Military Support (VMS) Programs All-American Requirement

To qualify for All-American, a **minimum donation of \$100** must be donated to **VMS** by **June 30, 2024**. VMS donations will only be handled through the Dashboard. All Posts must click on the “VMS Donation” tab on the Dashboard to donate. The link will point them to OMS. Please do not send checks to the National Headquarters. If a Post does not use a credit card, the Post will send their donation to their Department HQs and the Department HQs will submit the donation for their Post. Credit will automatically update on the Dashboard daily. Overseas Departments will donate for the other programs through the link also in lieu of participation. This will automatically update daily.

Do not use the red donate link in the upper right-hand corner of this webpage. This is for general donation purposes only.

125th National Convention – Louisville, Kentucky

As we plan for the **2024 National Convention**, there will be a new design for the **VMS Lapel Pins** for **2024-25 Program year!** VMS Chairs will be able to pre-order their pins and will be able to pick them up at the convention again this year. Request forms will be provided sometime in April 2024.

VMS Program Chair Tools

The Veterans & Military Support Program Chair Tools webpage is updated every month. Link to the webpage is <https://www.vfw.org/community/troop-support/VMSP-Chair-Tools>.

VFW's “Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship”

The **2024 Fall Semester** application is available now and can only be found online at vfw.org/Scholarship with a **deadline date of April 30, 2024.**

Continue to do what you are doing and thank you for your support!

VFW Programs

DISPLAYING MILITARY SERVICE SYMBOLS. Military service flags, insignias, etc. should be displayed in the following order (left to right as you face the flags): Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force and then Coast Guard. For military flags, go to vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=MilitaryFlag.

PROGRAMS DASHBOARD TOOL. (NOTE: Previously ALL-AMERICAN DASHBOARD) Please encourage Posts to read the 2023-24 Membership program. Military Assistance Program grants have been launched to show Departments and Posts how much in grant assistance has been received from National HQs to supplement the Unmet Needs financial grants & VFW Sport Clips Help A Hero scholarship statistics. The information charts reside in the KPI tools section.

VFW HONOR'S AMERICA'S TEACHERS DURING 2023–24 PROGRAM YEAR. Congratulations to the following teachers who were selected National winners for 2023-24:

Elementary School level – Eugene V. Struzik, III, Northwest Elementary School, Dodge City, Kansas, selected by VFW Post 1714, Dodge City, Kansas.

Middle School level – Monica Galloway, Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School, Laurel, Maryland, selected by VFW Post 9376, Clinton, Maryland.

High School level – Edward M. Graf, Somerset County Vocational and Technical High School, Bridgewater, New Jersey, selected by VFW Post 7858, Bernardsville, New Jersey.

National awards will be presented in July to each teacher during the VFW National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. Each of the winners will receive an all-expense-paid trip to the National Convention and \$1,000 cash award for professional development expenses (winners will receive a 1099-MISC); \$1,000 award to each winning teacher's school; plaques for both the winning teacher and his or her school. Each Department's recipients and their schools will receive a National Commendation citation, which will be sent to the Department Headquarters for presentation.

NEW UPDATES. VFW National Programs has updated the Fred C. Hall and Outstanding Community Service Post award programs starting this program year. Please share this with your Community Service Chairpersons.

FRED C. HALL MEMORIAL AWARD FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE. Each year on July 1, the national Programs office will determine the top community service Posts in each conference, based off their community service reporting and total impact, from July 1 to June 30 the previous year. Your community service total impact is figured by the money spent to host and organize the community service event, plus total hours all volunteers participated, plus the mileage for all volunteers (Dollars Donated + Hours + Mileage = Total Impact).

These four Posts will be awarded the Fred C. Hall Memorial Award for Community Service and will be invited to attend the VFW National Convention. The Post Commander (or designated representative) and a guest will

receive round-trip airfare, hotel accommodations for five nights, and a \$599 stipend to receive the award at the VFW National Convention.

OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE POST OF THE YEAR. Each Department will have an OCSF winner based on total impact also. National will select based on end of year reports on July 1. Winners will also be published in the Convention program booklet and receive a street sign identifying this national award for the Post to put up in their community.

HALF-STAFF U.S. FLAG. The U.S. Flag should be at half-staff on Memorial Day, the last Monday in May (federal holiday - half-staff until noon). Flags available at VFW Store vfwstore.org/category/flags/usflags.

FLAG DAY, JUNE 14. All VFW units are reminded to properly display the U.S. Flag on Flag Day, Friday, June 14 and to conduct a ceremony or program as feasible. You may contact the VFW Communications Department for a Flag Day speech. It is also suggested Posts should award the VFW Patriotic Citizen Award (Product No. 4385) for those who have daily displayed our National flag.

“UPDATED” POW/MIA FLAG -- OFFICIAL DISPLAY DAYS. Under previous Public Law 105-85 (Nov. 16, 1997), it indicated there were only six days that federal agencies, military installations and U.S. post offices were required to display the POW/MIA flag. Now under new law, Public Law 116-67 (Feb. 21, 2020), it is required that the POW/MIA flag be flown on all days on which the flag of the United States is displayed. To purchase a POW/MIA flag, go to vfwstore.org/products/GP237.

IRS AND VFW AWARD MONIES. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires that any recipient that receives more than a \$599 award should receive a Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable. This will include the VFW programs Patriot’s Pen and Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award.

VFW Member Benefits

Save Money While Making Memories.

Life experiences can often change our view of the world and how we perceive others. Trips to new places often offer the chance to experience new perspectives and help us grow as human beings. While money can come, and money can go, making memories helps create a narrative that can be shared and passed along to children, grandchildren, and our friends and family.

Now, with access to exclusive discounts on everything from home goods and the latest gadgets, to entertainment, travel, and big-ticket buys, being a VFW member means you get to save time AND money! Visit <https://vfw.perkspot.com/login> to create an account and save on your next adventure.

“Buddy”[®] Poppy

NATIONAL “BUDDY”[®] POPPY DISPLAY CONTEST. The time frame for registering and setting up the Department winning Buddy Poppy displays for the national judging at convention will be the same as usual. Department winning entries will be accepted for registration and may be set up beginning at 8:00 a.m.,

Saturday, July 27, until noon, Monday, July 29, 2024. Winning displays will be identified with appropriate ribbons on Tuesday morning and announced later on the convention floor. Displays must be removed prior to 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday afternoon. Any displays left after this time will be removed for disposal by convention center personnel during the disassembly of the hall.

“BUDDY”® POPPY CAMPAIGN. Although we emphasize Buddy Poppies on Veterans Day and Memorial Day, it is important to realize that the distribution of Buddy Poppies should be a year-round exercise. Each time a Post participates in an activity where the public will be present, Buddy Poppies should be present as a fundraising tool and simply to recognize our fallen comrades. Where the VFW appears, Buddy Poppies should be a constant reminder that we will never forget those who have perished in the name of liberty. Just as “They Gave, Will You?” is a year-round thing, so should the distribution of VFW Buddy Poppies.

Remember that your poppies should be ordered a minimum of three (3) weeks in advance of your distribution date.

BUDDY POPPY UPDATE: National Headquarters conducted a review of the Buddy Poppy policy and procedures and implemented the following changes effective Jan. 1, 2024:

- 1) Departments must order poppies through OMS.
- 2) All claims of non-receipt of a Buddy Poppy order must be made within 90 days of the date of the order or will NOT be replaced free of charge.
- 3) All orders for the traditional Buddy Poppy, Anniversary Poppies or tin tab poppies must be placed through your Department Headquarters. Auxiliaries must go through their Post to order all poppies.
- 4) The tabs do count towards the Buddy Poppy requirement for the All-American program.
- 5) If you do not receive your order within four weeks of placing it with your Department, please contact your Department Headquarters to report you have not received your order.
- 6) All poppies are shipped within 10 days of ordering except orders placed in June and July, due to preparation for National Convention, please allow an additional five business days.

Miscellaneous items (coin cans, buttons, posters, etc.) should be ordered directly from the VFW Store at vfwstore.org/category/programs/buddypoppy or the VFW Store/Emblem and Supply Catalog.

The Manual of Procedure provides that Post relief funds may be used for programs such as Voice of Democracy, Patriot’s Pen, Citizenship Education, and Community Service as long as suggestions in the chairperson’s guidebooks are used as an example of promoting these programs.

Posts are further reminded that Section 711 of the Manual of Procedure provides that non-profit organizations, exempt from taxes under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code, may assist with the distribution of Buddy Poppies, provided there shall be no division of proceeds. A donation to these groups may be made from the Post general fund.

VFW SILVER, GOLD, AND DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY POPPIES. The silver, gold and diamond anniversary Buddy Poppies are for Posts that are currently in their 25th, 50th or 75th anniversary years. For Posts currently in their 100th year anniversary, they can order any color and as many as they need. Please limit your order of anniversary poppies to 1,000 to ensure stock does not run out unless you are currently in your 100th year. These are ordered through the Department in OMS and processed the same as the red poppies. Currently we have no plans to replenish inventory due to increased cost and the small quantities we sell of the Anniversary Poppies. Based on the past four years’ sales, we have sufficient inventory for the next 3.5 years of the Gold, 5 years of Diamond and 52 years of the Silver.

Quartermaster General

The Life Membership Board of Trustees, with the concurrence of the National Council of Administration, pursuant to Section 111 of the VFW Bylaws, has determined that for the 2024-25 membership year, the Life Membership Fund will pay out as follows:

- Plan ABC - A total payout of \$10.50 for each life member (\$3.50 to each Post, Department and National)
- Plan D - A total payout of \$11.46 for each life member (\$3.82 to each Post, Department and National)
- Plan E - A total payout of \$22.62 for each life member (\$7.54 to each Post, Department and National)
- Note: At-Large Members are corresponding Plan pay out amount divided by two. For example, Plan ABC At-Large Payout is \$5.25.

Payment will be made in September 2024 for all Life Members recorded as of August 31, 2024. In addition, a payment will be made in January 2025 for all Life Members processed during the period September 1 through December 31, 2024.

If you have any questions, please contact Marc Garduno, Quartermaster General, MGarduno@vfw.org

National Veterans Service

LAST CALL FOR VFW SERVICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR 2023-24 NOMINATIONS

The deadline for submitting nominations for the John A. Biedrzycki Accredited Service Representative of the Year Award for 2023-2024 is **April 30, 2024**.

Each Department Commander may nominate one eligible individual for this award. The individual who is ultimately chosen as the recipient of the award will be furnished round-trip travel (for the winner and one guest) and two night's hotel accommodations to attend the VFW National Convention where the award will be presented. In addition, the award recipient will receive \$599 in recognition of their accomplishments and to offset travel expenses.

We encourage every Department to put forth a candidate. A nomination shows that Department leadership is aware of the significant contributions service representatives make in your community.

Nominations can be submitted to NVS via email to taldana@vfw.org by no later than April 30.

ACCREDITED SERVICE OFFICER TRAINING, ANNAPOLIS, MD, APRIL 21-24, 2024

The upcoming VFW National Veterans Service Proficiency Training Conference (PTC) for accredited representatives is being held April 21-24, 2024, at the Doubletree Annapolis, Maryland, with a virtual workgroup option for those who cannot attend our live conference.

While registration has already ended, this is a reminder that your Department Service Office may be closed while your accredited representatives attend this training which is essential to maintaining expert knowledge of the veterans' benefits system.

Questions regarding this or any VFW National Veterans Service sponsored training, should be addressed to Mike Figlioli, Director, VFW National Veterans Service, at mfiglioli@vfw.org.

Administrative Operations

Post Election Reports must be submitted no later than June 1 to the National Headquarters.

Installing officers are directed to see to it that the Post Election Reports have been completed and submitted to National Headquarters. If a Post Election Report has not been forwarded to National Headquarters at the time of installation, the installing officer shall complete and forward such report at the time of the installation of Post Officers no later than June 1. **We encourage all Post Quartermasters to use the online Election Report process featured in the Online Membership System (OMS)**, which is located behind the member's "LOGIN" at vfw.org. Post Election Reports received electronically will be forwarded to the Department Headquarters.