

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



BULLETIN

Ocala, Florida

December 2023

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

COMMANDER'S CHALLENGE

December brings us halfway through the membership year, and we want to see our membership continue to grow! This month, Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento is issuing a challenge to our Posts to increase their membership percentage in December!

Throughout the month of December, we are going to track our Post's membership percentages. This means new members, reinstated members, renewals, dues-paying transfers - we want to see more active paid members in the Post!

As a reminder, to figure your membership percentage you take your total current paid members and divide it by your prior year total. Or you can just go check out Memstats and we will do the math for you!

This challenge will compare the Post's membership percentage as of Dec. 1 and compare it to where your membership percentage is at close of business on Dec. 31. The Post in each membership division that shows the greatest increase will receive a \$500 award plus a custom Commander-in-Chief Jacket. We have eleven membership divisions so that means there will only be eleven of these jackets ever made. If you want everyone to know that your Post has met the challenge for membership excellence, now is your chance!

This is a season of giving and now is the time to give your best when it comes to strengthening our membership. We want you all to continue to build this organization, engage with our members, and to always go out there and **MEET THE CHALLENGE!**

EARLY BIRD AWARD-VFW LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

The top three Post Commanders and Quartermasters in each division on Jan. 1, 2024, will receive:

- **A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.**

POST COMMANDER AND QUARTERMASTER NEW & REINSTATED MEMBER AWARD

The top ten Post Commanders and Quartermasters in each division who report more than fifty new and/or reinstated members by Jan. 1, 2024, will each be awarded:

- **A travel charger with the official VFW Commander-in-Chief logo.**

MEMBERSHIP OBJECTIVES

As the membership year has begun, keep in mind our membership objectives also written in the 2023-24 Membership Program.

- For everyone to recruit at least one new member and then mentor that member.
- Increase membership drives and/or events.
- For Posts, Districts and Departments to reach 102% membership by June 30, 2024.
- Develop new Posts and/or revitalize existing Posts.
- Increase Life membership and Legacy Life Membership.
- Provide membership assistance using teams from your conference to assist and mentor those who request assistance.

NEW POST DEVELOPMENT & POST REVITALIZATION DEPARTMENT AWARD

Congratulations to the Department of Pacific Areas for establishing new VFW Post 12224, Puerto Princesa City, Philippines, established on October 22, 2023.

Congratulations goes out to the Department of Colorado for establishing VFW Post 12226, Sterling, Colorado and VFW Post 12227, Falcon, Colorado, established, Oct. 27 and Oct. 28, 2023, respectively. 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 Dec. 4, 2023, at 2:00 PM, CDT, Topic: TBD. 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 on the right. 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 offers 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

The 2023-24 VFW Foundation grant applications are available at vfw.org/Grants. VFW Posts, Districts and Auxiliaries may qualify for grant funding. A total of three reimbursement-based grant opportunities will be provided:

#StillServing Grant (SSG) – This grant provides reimbursement of up to \$1,500 for expenses incurred while performing community service activities where Post/District/Auxiliary members engaged community members directly.

Post Assistance Grant (PAG) – This grant provides reimbursement of up to \$2,500 for expenses incurred from purchasing qualifying equipment or making repairs/renovating a Post owned property.

Uniting to Combat Hunger (UTCH) Grant – This grant provides reimbursement of up to \$1,500 for donations made to food insecurity organizations or for the purchase of food that supports a Post or Auxiliary ran food pantry.

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

Development

As we near the season of giving, 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.*

MATCHING GIFT OFFER! – Look out for a special notice coming to your mailbox this month! Friends of the VFW have generously pledged to triple your donation for the next 30 days, kickstarting our 2023 Annual Challenge with a commitment of \$50,000 from their own pockets. They recognize that the cost of war extends far beyond the battlefield and believe that there are many others who share this understanding. Proud VFW members like you are being called upon to support our newest veterans, especially those returning home disabled by war. Your contribution to the VFW today will not only be matched but tripled. To make sure every dollar counts toward the 2023 Annual Challenge, please ensure that all gifts are postmarked within the next 30 days. Your generosity will make a significant difference in the lives of our veterans. Thank you for your ongoing support!

VFW Kicks Off the 2023 Year-End Campaign with the Friends of Freedom Online Community –

November 25 is the start of the VFW's 2023 Year-End Campaign, running until December 31! Keep an eye on your inbox for an email from the VFW and consider making a generous, tax-deductible year-end contribution. You can also make a donation by [clicking here](#). We also encourage you to spread the word about the campaign across your social media networks. Given the rapidly increasing demand for VFW programs, your support for this year's 2023 Year-End Campaign is more vital than ever. Your contribution will directly impact veterans of all generations by enabling VFW Accredited Service Officers to provide essential assistance in applying for and securing their hard-earned VA benefits. It will also support military families in financial distress by providing assistance for rent, utilities, and other necessities. Furthermore, your generosity ensures that all veterans are effectively represented on Capitol Hill, safeguarding their rights and benefits. Your generosity creates life-changing opportunities for our nation's heroes when they need it most.

Celebrate the Holiday Season by Helping Fellow Veterans – Your support of the VFW this holiday season – and throughout the year – is extremely important in helping the VFW's efforts to serve and assist veterans of all generations who are sick, unemployed, homeless, or suffering from combat wounds received long ago. We recently mailed a special edition of the 2024 VFW "Fly the Flag" Calendar, and we also included a bonus gift – a beautiful VFW "American Songbirds" Calendar. The 2024 VFW Veterans Service Annual Campaign will be mailing early in January. By supporting these programs, you help veterans and their families in need throughout the year in your Department and across the country. And please display the U.S. flag – especially on patriotic holidays, which are marked in your new VFW Calendars. You can visit heroes.vfw.org/Flag and print a free flag poster to display.

Smart Ways to Give Before 2023 Ends – Finish the year with a gift that maximizes your impact AND reduces your taxes. If made before Dec. 31 your donation qualifies for a 2023 tax deduction. Help veterans of every generation and consider making a gift to the VFW before the year is out.

Our team at the VFW Planned Giving Office can help you plan for the future—and continue supporting our country's veterans while doing so. Contact our office at 816.968.1119, or by emailing plannedgiving@vfw.org, to receive free information about estate planning.

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!

Veterans & Military Support Programs

Help us let the public know the impacts the VFW has on military families and veterans by reporting your holiday events to your Veterans & Military Support Chairperson. MAP grants have increased for the holiday season. Please complete the MAP after event requirements within the **14-day deadline**. If you have any questions, please call the MAP office at 816.756.3390, ext. 6211.

VFW’s “Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship”

The spring 2024 application closed Nov. 15, 2023. The fall 2024 application will be available early January 2023 and can be found online at vfw.org/Scholarship with a deadline date of April 30, 2024.

VMS All-American Requirement

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.

Your \$100 or more donation meets the eligibility criteria for All-American in this category.

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

Veterans & Military Support (VMS)

If your Department has not paid for their 2023-24 VMS Lapel Pins, please pay for them as soon as possible. You may use the VMS Donation link on the upper right-hand corner of the Dashboard.

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

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.

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 statistic. The information charts reside in the KPI tools section.

SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD PROGRAM DEADLINE REMINDER. Post level judging should be completed at this time and their winners' nominations forwarded on to the next level of judging, District, if applicable, or on to their VFW Department Headquarters. A completed nomination should consist of a completed entry form with a one-page resume as a minimum or up to five-pages, including the resume, as a maximum of documentation of their teacher experience, along with a head-and-shoulder photo, if available at the time.

Each corresponding deadline for Post, District, if applicable, and Department to have their entries to the next level are as follows: Nov. 15, 2023, for completion of Post judging; Dec. 15, 2023, for completion of District judging, if applicable; Feb. 1, 2024, for completion of Department judging and their winners forwarded to National Headquarters.

NOTE: The only item the National VFW Programs Department requires is the "VFW Department Teacher Award Citation Request Form" with the entry documentation downloaded. A link has been forwarded to the Department Adjutant/Quartermaster to submit it to National Headquarters. You may locate additional information by logging in to vfw.org and searching under "My VFW" in the Training & Support section.

The VFW's Department Citizenship Education Teacher Award includes a citation for both the winning teacher and their school.

The VFW's National Citizenship Education Teacher Awards include: three national \$1,000 awards for the top K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 teachers for professional development expenses; \$1,000 award to each winning teacher's school; plaques for both the winning teacher and school; and an all-expense-paid trip to attend a VFW National Convention.

If you have questions regarding any of the above, please email tbeauchamp@vfw.org or call 816.756.3390 and ask for extension 6287 or Tammy Beauchamp.

VFW NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVANT AWARDS. Judging at Post level should have been completed at this time or the near future. VFW Post Safety Chairperson's are to submit up to five winning nominees (one for each career area) to their Department Headquarters for judging no later than Jan. 1.

Once judging has been completed, Departments are asked to submit their five winning nominees (one for each career area) to the VFW Programs office, by completing the "VFW Department Public Servant Award Request Form" through Formstack. VFW Programs staff has emailed the form link to Department Adjutants/Quartermasters prior to the deadline of Feb. 1.

VFW Programs will create citations for the following awards in each Department:

- VFW National Law Enforcement Award
- VFW National Firefighter Award
- VFW National Emergency Medical Technician Award
- VFW National 911 Dispatcher Award
- VFW National Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician (E.O.D.T.) Award

Each Department will receive their requested awards and should contact their recipients to arrange a presentation. Department Commanders may present the awards at their Department Convention, but are encouraged to also present the award in front of the recipient's peers at a professional association event, city council meeting, etc. The purpose of the second venue is to expose these VFW awards to the public and especially other law enforcement, firefighters, EMTs, dispatchers and EODTs personnel, many of whom are veterans eligible for VFW membership. Order plaques and citations for public servants from the VFW Store vfwstore.org/searchresults?q=public%20servant.

Simply visit vfw.org, log in to My VFW, then look under Member Resources, click on **VFW Training & Support**, then click on **Community Service & Youth Programs**, then look under **Public Servant Program**.

NOTE: Remember, the First Responder Medal is available through the VFW Store. To review this item, please click on the following link: vfwstore.org/products/32134.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT'S PEN DEPARTMENT DEADLINE REMINDER. The deadline for submitting the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen winner packets to National Headquarters is Jan. 15, 2024 (even if they have not been personally notified, they are the winner).

The suggested deadline for Departments to have reviewed and approved their District and Post entries in the All-American Dashboard is Jan. 31. This will ensure we have accurate reporting numbers across the organization and allot us the time to remedy errors. If you are unsure how to report your participation in the All-American Dashboard or if you are having login issues to the OMS system, contact Nick Lopez at nlopez@vfw.org or 816.968.1155.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT'S PEN NATIONAL AWARDS. Every Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen first place Department winner will receive a National scholarship or award. The amount for the Voice of Democracy National Awards now totals \$172,000, with the top three awards being raised to \$35,000, \$21,000, and \$15,000. The Patriot's Pen National Awards total is \$55,000.

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.

The new programs are as follows:

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 OSCP 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 ON DEC. 7. Public Law 103-308, passed in 1994, designates Dec. 7 as “National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day” and requests the flag of the United States to be flown at half-staff (sunrise to sunset) in honor of the individuals who lost their lives on that day. To order a flag, go to vfwstore.org/category/flags/usflags.

“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

Keep a Little More Cash in Your Pocket This Holiday Season

Dash through the deals this holiday season with the VFW Perkspot savings program. Whether you are traveling to see family members, looking for the perfect gift for the perfect someone, or want to make good on your New Year resolution, dash through the deals this holiday season with the VFW PerkSpot savings program.

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 vfw.perkspot.com/login to create an account and keep a little more cash in your pocket this holiday season.

“Buddy”® Poppy

“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 Aug. 1, 2023:

- 1) Departments must order poppies through OMS.
- 2) 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.
- 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) If you do not report a missing order within 90 days of processing, the order will NOT be replaced free of charge, and you will have to resubmit your order.

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.

National Veterans Service

LAST CALL FOR 2023 VA VOLUNTARY SERVICE (VAVS) NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NAC) VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD NOMINATIONS

REMINDER: The deadline for submission of nominations for the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Volunteer of the Year awards is **Dec. 8, 2023**.

Nominations are for two awards (one male and one female), which will be presented during the 2024 VAVS National Advisory Committee meeting. **Nominees for this award must participate in established VAVS assignments, serve as a Regularly Scheduled (RS) Volunteer and meet one of the following criteria:**

- Volunteer with hospitalized Veterans
- Volunteer with Veterans at Outpatient Clinics
- Volunteer with Veterans in Community Living Centers
- Volunteer with homeless Veterans
- Volunteer with Veterans and Veterans groups in the community
- Host Veterans functions in the Lodge, Post, Chapter, i.e., Memorial Day, July 4th and Veterans Day observances, etc., that qualify as a VAVS assignment.
- Host Veterans functions outside the Lodge, Post, Chapter, i.e., fishing trips, day at the races, sporting events, etc., that qualify as a VAVS assignment.
- Visit Veterans confined to their homes as a VAVS assignment.
- Adopt-A-Veteran

If your Department has not already done so, please select your two candidates (one male and one female) and send all supporting documentation along with their nomination letters to: jmoss@vfw.org.

National Legislative Service/Action Corps

Do not Feed the Sharks

The VFW has issued a Claim Shark factsheet for you to share with fellow veterans and social media communities. A Claim Shark is an individual or company that charges hefty fees to “assist” or “consult” veterans with filing their VA benefit claims. This practice is illegal! Like the VFW said last year during testimony before Congress, “In our opinion, any group that fails to adhere to VA’s well-established standards of accreditation and fee arrangements should be met at the door by Capitol Police, not offered a seat at the same table as hard-working, VA-accredited advocates who are held to professional and ethical standards designed to protect veterans.” [Get the factsheet.](#)