

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



BULLETIN

Ocala, Florida

February 2024

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

COMMANDER'S CHALLENGE, DON'T LET THEM FALL THROUGH THE CRACKS!

Every year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars loses a significant portion of our annual members whose dues lapse, and they fall off our rosters. For the month of February 2024, our VFW Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento is challenging YOU to turn it around and help keep our membership strong!

This month's challenge will count all renewals and reinstates processed during February. This means if a member whose dues have lapsed for any amount of time OR will lapse before the end of June 2024 pays their membership dues (Annual or Life) - the Post will get credit for this contest.

The Posts that lead their membership divisions in renewals and reinstates for the month of February will be given a new top-of-the-line laptop computer to better assist with their membership goals and processing! We want to put the tools in your hands to help our Posts succeed!

We know how important it is to recruit members into the organization. We also need to focus on keeping those members we have and staying strong! Retention is vital to membership success. By keeping our membership strong, we can be assured of continuing our mission to help our nation's veterans and to go out and **MEET THE CHALLENGE!**

MEETING THE CHALLENGE AWARD

The top two Post Commanders and the top two District Commanders in each division who achieve 102 percent membership by April 1, 2024, will each be awarded:

- **A five-night hotel accommodation at the National Convention.**

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 towards airfare, accommodations, and transportation for a trip of their own choice.**

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

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 toward 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 Feb. 5, 2024, at 2:00 PM, CDT, Topic: **Recruiting Responsibilities**. 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 VFW Foundation is actively pursuing sponsorships for the historic 125th VFW National Convention to be held July 27-Aug. 1, 2024, in Louisville, Kentucky, as we are reaching out to current and new prospective corporate partners.

On Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024, Sport Clips Haircuts presented a \$1.3 million check to the VFW Foundation in support of the VFW’s “Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship.” The celebration at VFW Post 7397 in Lenexa, Kansas was attended by VFW National Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento along with Sport Clips Founder, VFW Foundation board member, VFW Life member, Gordon Logan, and Sport Clips CEO Edward Logan. Additionally, numerous local Kansas City area veterans received free haircuts.

Help A Hero has grown to be the largest scholarship program of its kind, offering service members and veterans support for education often needed in post-military careers. For the spring 2024 semester, 175 scholarships totaling nearly \$800,000 have been awarded!

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

VFW National Convention

VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION HOUSING – 125th National Convention housing will officially open March 18, 2024. Housing reservation information will be located on the convention website accessed through the main VFW website at vfw.org/convention. The convention website will also have general convention information including the registration form and links to other convention related information for Louisville, Kentucky – July 27-Aug. 1, including a tentative agenda.

CONVENTION REGISTRATION – Section 222 of the Manual of Procedure states each Post will pay, in advance, a National Convention registration fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25) which shall entitle the Post to a packet of convention information and materials, and one identified registered delegate for the VFW National Convention. Each additional delegate attending the National Convention will pay a ten-dollar (\$10) delegate fee provided the Post has paid the mandated \$25 advance registration fee. All advance registrations should be mailed to the VFW National Headquarters, 406 W. 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111. **ATTN:** Convention Registration, Quartermasters are strongly encouraged to register delegates utilizing the on-line membership system (OMS).

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.*

2024 VFW National Veterans Service (NVS) Annual Campaign Update – If you received our mailing in early January, you should have the 2024 Petition to Congress and an “American Hero” Memorial Day Ribbon Card. Your support is crucial as we collect petitions to convey our commitment to protecting veterans' benefits from potential fiscal changes to our congressional leaders. The signed cards will be distributed to hospitalized veterans and service members by Memorial Day. Additionally, some members have received the 2024 “Help Our Heroes” Member Survey, and we are actively collecting and tallying responses.

In late-January, a reminder letter was sent, including a Special Veterans' Petition addressed to the President and Congressional leaders. The VFW remains steadfast in urging our leaders to honor their promises to those who served. Please sign and return the petitions promptly and consider making a contribution to support the VFW National Veterans Service. Together, let us make our voices heard in Washington, D.C.

Your support is still urgently needed for the 2024 VFW NVS Annual Campaign. Your donation right now ensures the VFW's national force of highly trained, professional service officers is at the ready to help America's veterans navigate the complicated VA system.

VFW Accredited Service Officers help veterans and their survivors cut through the red tape to receive VA compensation and pension benefits they have earned. The VFW recovered \$13 billion in compensation in pension on behalf of approximately 570,000 veterans and eligible family members in fiscal year 2023. VFW Accredited Service Officers are there for all veterans to help them apply for and receive their hard-earned VA benefits. This service is available to all veterans **FREE OF CHARGE** — and made possible through your donations. Please, watch your mail for this important campaign.

Voice of Democracy State Winners Coming to the Web – It is almost time! Keep an eye on the VFW's website in late Feb. to see the faces – and hear the performances – of the state winners of this year's Voice of Democracy audio-essay competition. Sign up at vfw.org to receive alerts in your inbox.

Save Your Money Today, Make a Difference Anyway – Did you know you can make a gift to the VFW without affecting your daily budget? You can include us as a beneficiary on your retirement account or insurance policy. This way, you support tomorrow's veterans without eating into your bottom line: <https://vfw.planmylegacy.org/save-money-make-difference>. The VFW Planned Giving Office is here to help if you have questions. Call us at 816.968.1119 or email us at plannedgiving@vfw.org.

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 Jan. 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

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 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!

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)

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'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.

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.

SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD PROGRAM REMINDER. Nominations for this award and the judging at the Post, District and Department level (if applicable) should be completed. After Department judging, each Department could have selected one candidate from each category and submitted their winners to VFW National Headquarters by Feb. 1. The Department Teacher winners that are received at National Headquarters will be entered in the National judging and receive a VFW National citation for both the winning teacher and their school.

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 by Feb. 1. You may locate additional information by logging in to vfw.org and searching under "My VFW" in the Training & Support section. If you have questions regarding any of the above, please email tbeauchamp@vfw.org or call 816.756.3390 and ask for extension 6287.

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 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.

“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

Think about all your monthly expenses: rent or a home mortgage, utilities, car payments, groceries, loans, kids’ tuitions, Netflix, etc. It is hard making ends meet as it is, and it feels like some of these expenses never end. However, have you ever asked yourself *“Would my family be able to cover these costs if something were to happen to me?”*

You can help protect your loved ones by looking into all the life plans available in the insurance market. Each product is meant to protect you and your spouse through all stages of your life. Whether you are still employed or living in your retirement, you are guaranteed acceptance until the age of seventy-five.

For additional information about your Life Insurance Plan options [click here](#) or call 1.877.850.0183.

“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.

National Veterans Service

ACCREDITED SERVICE OFFICER PROFICIENCY TRAINING, ANNAPOLIS, MD

National Veterans Service will conduct a hybrid training conference for VFW accredited representatives April 21-24, 2024, at the DoubleTree Annapolis Hotel in Annapolis, Maryland. This hybrid course will include in-person instruction that will be live-streamed simultaneously via electronic media to those who are unable to attend in person. Formal notification to students required to participate in these conferences has been sent out. Please address questions relating to accredited service officer training to Chris Macinkowicz, Assistant Director, Training & Quality Assurance, NVS, at cmacinkowicz@vfw.org.

NOMINATION PERIOD FOR JOHN A. BIEDRZYCKI ACCREDITED SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YEAR FOR 2023-24 IS COMING SOON!

The importance of the work done by VFW accredited service representatives cannot be overstated as they are essential to the continued well-being of our nation's veterans and their families. Even as the VFW transitioned into a hybrid remote office environment, our accredited representatives continued to counsel veterans, complete paperwork, and submit VA claims for earned entitlements and benefits. Due to modern technology, the accredited representative's mission of providing services to veterans, their family members, or survivors can be conducted at any place, at any time!

Department Commanders will soon have the opportunity to recognize that ongoing commitment by nominating one (1) of their Department's accredited representatives for the John A. Biedrzycki Accredited Service Representative of the Year Award for 2023-24.

Official notification that the nomination period is open will be sent out in February. We encourage every Department to put forth a candidate. A nomination shows that Department leadership is aware of the significant contributions your program makes in your community every day.

National Legislative Service/Action Corps

VFW 2024 Priority Goals

The 118th Congress is now in its second session, and there is still work to be done. The [VFW 2024 Priority Goals](#) include many issues concerning benefits and services for veterans, service members, and their families. The VFW will continue to advocate diligently to ensure members of Congress and the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Labor provide the resources and care our nation's veterans have earned and deserve.