

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

**GENERAL SESSION MEETING – MID WINTER CONFERENCE
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2019**

WEST GATE LAKE RESORT, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

Opening ceremonies were held to include the Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

STATE COMMANDER DANNY ANDERSON stated we had a great joint opening session and hopes that the joint openings can continue in the future. Commander Anderson then recognized National Jr. Vice-C-I-C Hal Roesch, and National Council Member Benny Bachand. Commander Anderson also recognized Past Department Commanders. Commander Anderson also recognized National Council member Al Lipphardt from Georgia.

NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBER BENNY BACHAND stated that the National Council is there to make sure we are represented within the organization. Benny then thanked everyone for all that they did at the services for Past Department Commander Jack Carney who passed away earlier this year.

NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE JR. VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HAL ROESCH spoke about a funeral for a very special comrade-Rosemary Mariner-who was the Navy's first tactical pilot. Hal stated that the services were being held today in Tennessee and the Navy would be doing a fly over as a tribute to her. Hal then spoke briefly on Blue Water Navy which recognizes those that weren't on the ground exposed to Agent Orange. Hal then stated that moving forward there is going to be a schedule implemented for Departments to be inspected by National. Hal stated that at this time inspections are only at post and district levels. Hal spoke about how this inspection process will hold Departments more responsible.

MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE GRAND COMMANDER GARY GODARD spoke about how important the MOC is. Gary reported that since June the Hospital report states that there was over \$81,000 raised. The Military Order of the Cooties is the honor degree of the Veterans of Foreign Wars bringing smiles to those in beds of white.

ADJUTANT/QUARTERMASTER GENE PERRINO made a motion to accept the minutes to the Council of Administration meeting held on Friday, October 26, 2018 as published on the Department website, motion seconded by Chief of Staff Mike Clinesmith, Motion passed.

Motion made by Gene Perrino to accept the minutes to the General Session held on Saturday, October 27, 2018 as published on the Department website, motion seconded by State Sr. Vice Commander Tony Purdy, motion passed.

STATE CHAPLAIN HARRY SEILER stated that so far this year nursing home and hospital visits are -313; cards that have been given out are 191; flag presentations are 51 and memorial services performed is 77. Harry stated that we are doing the work and getting the exposure which is a great thing. Harry then stated that he will head up the Memorial Service at the National Convention and he is asking if anyone would like to volunteer to help hand out church brochures on Sunday morning to please see him.

STATE INSPECTOR DON BULT stated that seventeen posts still have not turned in or corrected their audits. Don also stated that the audit form online must be opened through Adobe Reader for it to work. Don spoke about inspections needing to be done by February 28th, and you have until March 31st to fix and submit and discrepancies. Don also stressed that posts are exempt from sales tax on beverage and food only; you still have to pay sales tax on everything else and file a DR15 form.

STATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR KURT SCHUH stated that our conference in Washington DC is coming up in the beginning of March. Kurt stated in the past month he met with the Orlando Hospital Center and talked about VA issues. Kurt also spoke about Congressman Brian Mast and talked how he is a hero and will be speaking at the banquet. Kurt stated that he is working to get disabled veterans plates for veterans that are disabled 50% or greater and for a small fee all these veterans could have one. Another thing Kurt spoke about were parking signs in the city, state and county for veterans to be able to park. Kurt stated if we can get parking signs in the city, state and county it may urge businesses to do the same. Kurt stated that Guide Star teaches you how to be part of a nonprofit. There are 45,000 veteran nonprofits registered and in Florida there are 2,223 and sixty five percent of nonprofits are from the American Legion and the VFW. In stating this Kurt urged everyone to be sure they are reporting things, since this is how we are recognized.

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR KURT SCHUH stated that we are at 91.45% right now and we have jumped almost 2% since January. The goal is 97% by the end of March and Kurt stated we can meet this goal.

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE DIRECTOR JASON SMITH addressed the Blue Water Navy stating that this was a very important court decision that affects tens of thousands of veterans. Jason stated they would like to start putting in claims for anyone that could be eligible if you feel that you meet the requirements. He also urged everyone to get the word out there to people that could be eligible but are unaware of the decision. Jason stated that he would be available after the meeting for anyone that would like to start a claim.

BECAUSE WE CARE CHAIRMAN DAVE HARRIS stated that when an application is filled out it needs to be signed by the Quartermaster or Commander or Service Officer to be accepted and we need to give all the information that we possibly can. Such as proof of military service so you are sure the individual was in the military and that we are giving to veterans. Dave also stressed that female veterans go through the same things as the male veterans and many time they also have children. Dave also touched on the Touch 7 Crisis Line and stated he has seen it work and it is a wonderful program. Dave thanked everyone for their support and donations were taken at this time.

HOSPITAL/CLINICS CHAIRMAN DANI HERNANDEZ stated that there are many wonderful things happening at the hospitals and the VAVS representatives are putting in a lot of time and effort. Dani recognized all the VAVS representatives that were in the room. Dani also stated that donations are always needed for these representatives to continue to do the great job that they are doing.

2018-2019 MEMBERSHIP AWARDS PRESENTATION BY STATE COMMANDER DANNY ANDERSON AND NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE JR. VICE C-I-C HAL ROESCH – All recruiting awards are verified by National Memstats as of January 8, 2019.

The Chief Petty Officer Award: Any member recruiting (15) new and/or reinstated members by May 31, 2019 will receive a specially designed Commander's Challenge Coin.

District 3 Post 8195 Hollywood – Vernon Nelson with 21 members.

District 9 Post 4256 Madeira Beach – John Douthurt with 15 members.

District 21 Post 2550 Dunedin – John Denunzio with 16 members.

The Senior Chief Petty Officer Award: Any member recruiting (25) new and/or reinstated members by May 31, 2019 will receive a specially designed Commander's Challenge Coin and a \$25.00 gift card.

District 3 Post 9610 Lake Park – Robert McQuaid Jr. with 29 members.

The Master Chief Petty Officer Award: Any member recruiting (5) or more new Life Members by May 31, 2019 the recruiter will receive a specially designed Commander's Challenge Coin and \$100.00 in gift cards.

District 5 Post 3911 Key West – Ken Thompson with 14 members.

District 6 Post 7909 Jacksonville – Glen Tilley 24 members.

District 9 Post 4256 Madeira Beach – Ron Mills with 10 members.

District 9 Post 10094 Largo – Jason Smith with 9 members.

District 9 Post 10094 Largo – Albert Pristera with 15 members.

District 17 Post 2185 Panama City – Dennis Harper with 13 members.

State Commander Danny Anderson then recognized Past C-I-C and Past Adjutant General John Hamilton.

VETERANS VILLAGE HOME BOARD PRESIDENT CHESTER PYATT thanked the Council for the Veterans Village new roof. Chester stated that there are 14 members on the Home Board. Chester also stated that donations are always needed since this is what they operate on. A donation was accepted at that time. Chester stated that if there is anyone that is having a function at any time to let the Veterans Village know and they will be happy to participate. Chester then gave the directors report. Chester then spoke about the Veterans Village picnic and stated that this is their biggest fundraiser of the year and urged everyone to come out and attend.

VETERANS VILLAGE DIRECTOR AL LUGO stated that his job is to take care of veterans and at the end of the day that is what everyone is here for. Al stated that it takes a team to get things done and he appreciates the support that he gets.

PAST COMMANDERS CLUB PRESIDENT KATIE SMAILIS stated that the Past Commanders Club meeting will be immediately following the general session in the same room. Katie also stated that they are doing a 50/50 drawing which helps support the G.I. Joe Awards and support for the Department. Katie then announced the donations that she had to give. Katie also stated that the G.I. Joe Awards are due by May 20, 2019 and the form is on the website under post forms.

PROGRAM CHAIRMAN TONY GARDNER stated that program reporting works hand in hand with membership. Tony also stated you should print out your report and take it with you when trying to recruit new members so you will be able to show them what we do in our organization. Tony stated that there are over 232,000 volunteer hours reported so far. Tony recognized Glenn Wright and Ron Chapman for all their hard work and dedication that they have put in for the Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen.

BUDDY POPPY CHAIRMAN RAY JARVIS stated that we have 19 districts with 161 posts and 54 participating posts have not put it in their reporting. Ray stressed that the posts must put in reports. Ray informed the membership of money that was raised through the Buddy Poppy program by post.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY CHAIRMAN GLENN WRIGHT stated that this is his second year as chairman and last year we had 87 posts participate in the Voice of Democracy and this year we had 120. Glenn stated that these children are our future and we need to hear what they are saying. Glenn hopes to be the chairman again next year. Glenn stated that the membership needs to be contacting the schools this year for next year's VOD. Glenn stressed to please be sure that your VOD gets reported so that you will receive the credit for it.

CITIZEN EDUCATION CHAIRMAN TONY SALVO stated that we had 40 posts participate in teacher of the year this year. Tony spoke about the excellent imputes this year and when judging it came down to those who talked about Americanism and Patriotism. Tony stated to please follow the criteria on the application form and continue the good work and getting the reports in.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES CHAIRMAN STEVE SCHNEIDER stated that as of today every post has at least one report in the youth activities. Steve stated to continue the good work and getting the reports in.

OLD BUSINESS: None at this time.

NEW BUSINESS: Past National C-I-C and Past Adjutant General John Hamilton spoke briefly on the National Convention which is coming to Orlando from July 20-24th. John stated that it takes approximately 60-70 volunteers at a minimum for the Convention and to please volunteer your time if you can and the next meeting will be on April 15th.

GOOD OF THE ORDER: National Council Member for Georgia, Al Lipphardt spoke briefly about running for the position of National Jr. Vice Commander in Chief. Al stated that we are a family and we have to take care of each other. Al also stated that his vision is commitment, credibility, and courage. We need to believe in what we do and do what we believe. Al stated that his mission will always be to take care of veterans.

Steve Surface then spoke in support of our candidate for National Jr. Vice C-I-C Amber Putnam. Steve stated that she is working hard for the position and that she needs our support and any donations that we are able to make towards Ambers campaign are greatly appreciated. Steve then thanked everyone for their help in the past year with Amber's campaign.

Membership Director Kurt Schuh then did a drawing giving away two baskets, one with the posts that had above 500 members or more and one with the posts that had less than 500 members.

Candidates for State Office are as follows:

State Commander – Tony Purdy
State Sr. Vice Commander – Glen Tilley
State Jr. Vice Commander – Dani Hernandez
State Quartermaster – Gene Perrino
State Judge Advocate – Dan Duffy
State Chaplain – Harry Seiler
State Surgeon – Ron Mills and Kurt Schuh

Candidates for the Veteran Village Home Board are as follows:

3 Year Term – George Higginbotham

State Adjutant/Quartermaster Gene Perrino made the following announcements for remaining events:

March 3-7 th	National Voice of Democracy and Legislative Conference, Washington, DC
March 29 th	VFW Veterans Village 8 th Annual Golf Tournament
March 30 th	VFW Veterans Village 19 th Annual Picnic
May 30-June 2 nd	Southern Area Quartermaster/Trustee School of Instruction, Holiday Inn, Fort Myers
June 7-9 th	Northern Area Quartermaster/Trustee School of Instruction, Florida Hotel, Orlando
June 20-23 rd	State Convention, Renaissance, Orlando
July 20-24 th	National Convention, Orlando

National Council Member Benny Bachand stated that at the State Convention he will present that we name our Headquarters the John M. Carney Memorial Building in memory of Past C-I-C John M. Carney.

Comments from the Council were taken at this time and there being no further business meeting was closed.