

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



BULLETIN

Ocala, Florida

January 2024

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

COMMANDER'S CHALLENGE

Happy new year VFW! This month, Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento is issuing a challenge to our Posts to bring in new members - but wait, there is more! Because this challenge is not just for the Posts, Departments can benefit as well!

It is a new year, and we want to see new members joining the VFW! So, for the month of January, the Post in each membership division that brings in the most new members (Annual and/or Life) will receive a \$500 award deposited into the Post account! In addition, for every Post that leads their Division, their Department will also receive a \$500 award. We want to see our Department leadership motivating everyone and helping our Posts recruit!

This challenge will count new members who join the Post between Jan. 1 and Jan. 31. As a reminder, a new member is a veteran who has never been a member of the VFW before. We all know eligible veterans who have not yet made the decision to become a member of the VFW, now is the time to bring them on board and make them a part of the Veterans of Foreign Wars!

There is no better time than now to help grow our ranks and help us meet the Commander-in-Chief's goal of 102% membership by the end of the year!

Communication is key to building a strong VFW, both with leadership providing encouragement and motivation and with each one of us going out, recruiting new veterans into the VFW, and showing that we can **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, District 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 Washington for establishing new VFW Post 12228, Stanwood, Washington, established, Dec. 12, 2023. 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 incentive's 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 Jan. 8, 2024, at 2:00 PM, CST, Topic: **Membership Roles at the Post**. 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 National Convention

VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION HOUSING CHANGE – 125th National Convention housing will open, **Monday, 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, 2024, and a tentative agenda.

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.*

2024 VFW National Veterans Service (NVS) Annual Campaign Kick Off – is underway, and we urgently need your support to make a meaningful impact on the lives of America's veterans. This campaign is crucial for assisting veterans from all generations, particularly those returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, in accessing the benefits they rightfully deserve. Your donation ensures the VFW’s national force of highly trained and accredited service officers is at the ready to help America’s veterans navigate the complicated VA system.

As a token of our appreciation, enclosed in this package, you will find the 2024 Petition to Congress and an "American Hero" Memorial Day Ribbon Card. We urge you to add your signature to the petition and card before returning them to us. The collected petitions will be delivered to Congress, sending a powerful message that any proposed cuts to veterans' benefits are unacceptable to those who have proudly worn the uniform. The signed cards will be distributed to hospitalized veterans and service members, bringing them a heartfelt reminder in time for Memorial Day. Some members will receive the 2024 “Help Our Heroes” Member Survey to fill out and return. Your valuable input, gathered through this survey, will play a crucial role in shaping our ongoing efforts to support veterans.

2024 Label and Certificate of Appreciation – This January, anticipate the arrival of the 2024 Label and Certificate of Appreciation from the VFW. Alongside these tokens of gratitude, you will find a special Memorial Day "American Hero" Ribbon Card. We kindly request you to sign and promptly return the card, as your participation holds the power to bring warmth and solace to our fellow service members and hospitalized veterans this Memorial Day. The act of receiving a Thank You card from a fellow veteran resonates deeply with those who have served.

Your gesture demonstrates that they are remembered and cared for by their comrades, providing a meaningful connection during a time of reflection. In honor of your fellow veterans navigating the long road to recovery from battle injuries, we invite you to donate. Your generosity directly contributes to the strength and availability of programs that provide crucial support for veterans across your Department.

Your 2023 Year-End Tax Receipt Is On Its Way! – Late January, we will be mailing the 2023 Year-End Tax Receipts to VFW members who have requested to receive one at the end of the year.

Do Not Ignore Your Online Accounts – When did you last think about ALL your online accounts? In the case of an emergency, someone near you might need access to those passwords. When the time comes to think about setting up your will/trust – make sure to also include how to access your devices and accounts. Write it down and keep it somewhere safe: vfw.planmylegacy.org/online-accounts. Starting to think about your legacy? Consider making a gift to the VFW in your will. We are always here to talk. Contact the VFW Planned Giving Office at 816.968.1119 or 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 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 2024 VFW Day of Service.

The VFW's third annual VFW Day of Service – a dedicated day of service led by VFW members throughout the country and the world – kicks off the first Saturday on May 4, 2024, and marks the start of veteran-led community service projects to take place throughout the month.

The VFW Day of Service is an outgrowth of the organization's #StillServing campaign launched in 2020 to recognize the ongoing dedication of veterans and service members who continue to serve their communities. VFW Day of Service, led by veterans and in concert with other organizations and civic groups, is open for anyone to participate.

We're urging all members and Posts to visit VFWDayofService.org to register their event on the interactive Day of Service map and receive a special participation decal, or find a local event to join and see what other veterans around the country are doing to make a difference.

Veterans & Military Support Programs

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.

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 2024 Fall Semester application will be available Jan. 1, 2024, 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.

FLY THE FLAG ON MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'S BIRTHDAY. The U.S. federal flag code has been amended by Congress and signed by the president to add Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to the list of days on which the flag should be displayed. His birthday is observed on the third Monday in January; therefore, the flag should be flown on that day. To purchase a U.S. flag from the VFW Store, go to vfwstore.org/category/flags/usflags.

Many communities are conducting community service projects that day. It is highly suggested that all members support this day of service.

SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD PROGRAM DEADLINE REMINDER. Nominations for this award and the judging at Post and District level, if applicable, should be completed at this time and their winners submitted to their VFW Department Headquarters for their judging by Jan. 1. 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 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 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 Programs Dashboard Tool 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 Programs Dashboard Tool 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.

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.

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.

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 OCSP 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

Is Pet Insurance Worth the Cost?

It seems that everything is more expensive lately. Though inflation has slowed, prices have yet to do the same. Used cars, rent, groceries, and gas prices all remain well above pre-pandemic prices.

Raising a pet seems to be getting more expensive, too. The dog sitting app, Rover, has estimated yearly dog expenses range from \$600 to \$3,500 depending on your location:

- Flea and tick prevention can cost up to \$215.
- Annual checkups are typically over \$100.
- Dental cleaning can cost upwards of \$600.

Give your wallet a break and save on pet ownership with these tips:

- Do not try new food before the weekend.
- Stay up to date on prevention and vaccines.
- Buy food in bulk or rely on auto ship.
- Purchase pet insurance.

For additional information about Pet Insurance, call Nationwide at 877.738.7874 or [click here](#).

“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.

Adjutant General

Legal

We have received some questions recently on a new law that is about to become effective. The Corporate Transparency Act passed in 2021, included a reporting requirement called the Beneficial Ownership Information Reporting rule, which will go into effect on January 1, 2024. It generally requires entities doing business in the U.S. to disclose information to the U.S. Treasury, under the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), about individuals who directly or indirectly own or control a company.

Under this ruling, there is an exemption for tax-exempt organizations. The entity qualifies for the exemption if they are organized under 501(c) of the IRS Code of 1986 and are exempt from tax under section 501(a) of the Code. An entity also qualifies if it is described in section 501(c) of the Code and was exempt from tax under section 501(a) of the Code but lost its tax-exempt status less than 180 days ago.

In summary, Posts, Districts and Departments who are a 501(c) [including 501(c)(19), 501(c)(3), and 501(c)(4)] and who are currently exempt with the IRS do not have to report to the FinCEN. Also, Posts, Districts and Departments who are a 501(c) and have lost their exemption in the last 180 days do not have to report to the FinCEN. If a Post, District or Department has lost their exemption more than 180 days ago, they must file with the FinCEN, as must any entity not organized under 501(c).

Click here for more information: [.fincen.gov/boi-faqs](https://fincen.gov/boi-faqs).

National Veterans Service

New Accredited Service Officer Virtual Basic Training

NVS is excited to announce that Virtual Basic Accredited Service Officer Training will be available Feb. 5-9, 2024, for newly accredited representatives who have not yet participated in an NVS training conference. This conference will be a hybrid conference, with attendees receiving video training using the VFW Online Learning Portal as well as daily live instruction using Zoom teleconferencing software.

Formal notification to students who are required to participate in this conference will be sent in the coming weeks, along with instructions on how to register and access the course.

National Legislative Service/Action Corps

Military Promotions Hold in Senate Finally Lifted

The year-long obstruction of hundreds of senior officer promotions has ended in large part to Sens. Dan Sullivan and Joni Ernst, both fellow VFW members. The hold on military promotions endangered our national security and that of our allies, further jeopardizing the sustainability of our all-volunteer force. VFW National Commander Duane Sarmiento commented, “Going forward, we urge Congress to work together to resolve political disputes within the halls of Congress and permanently abandon the dangerous practice of casting partisan politics on to those wearing the cloth of our nation. Let us remember, veterans vote.”

