

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



BULLETIN

Ocala, Florida

March 2024

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

MARCH MANIA IS HERE!

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

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

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

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

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

MEETING THE CHALLENGE AWARD

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

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

POST COMMANDER AND QUARTERMASTER DIVISION CHALLENGE

For every 10 new/reinstated members recruited between July 1, 2023, and April 1, 2024. Posts will earn one entry for both Post Commander and Quartermaster entered into a drawing. One post per division will receive:

- **A \$1,000 stipend each for the Post Commander and Quartermaster to be used toward attending the VFW 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 toward airfare, accommodations, and transportation for a trip of their own choice.**

NEW POST DEVELOPMENT & POST REVITALIZATION DEPARTMENT AWARD

We have had a pretty good year with Departments chartering new Posts this year; five to date. With overall recruiting numbers looking good, a hard look is still needed in retaining our members whether at the Post or Department level. In some cases, recovering members could be what is needed for a Post revitalization. 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 March 11, 2024, at 2:00 PM, CDT, Topic: **Roles of the Officers**. 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

A VFW Foundation Board meeting was held on Tuesday, Feb. 6 at VFW Headquarters. Of special interest was the Foundation's Financial Report for the Period Ending Dec. 31, 2023, presented by Marc Garduno, Secretary-Treasurer. Other main topics included Bylaws review and nominations for future Board members. Additionally, updates were provided for National Convention and Washington Conference sponsorships, donations, and grants.

Of special note, Oracle Health has confirmed \$40,000 in total sponsorships for the Washington Conference, the National Convention, and a specialty NVS roundtable discussion event in North Chicago on Feb. 24 in conjunction with Mike Figlioli, VFW Director NVS and Tony Lowe, VFW Foundation Consultant.

Representatives from Humana, the VFW and the VFW Foundation convened virtually on Monday, Jan. 28, 2024, for the annual Strategic Initiatives Planning Meeting. Special emphasis was given to better organizational coordination between VFW and Humana (at all levels) which will positively impact overall health and wellness in the veteran community. Additional joint venture opportunities were discussed to support food insecurity (Uniting To Combat Hunger), NVS training initiatives and its anti-shark predatory claims campaign, the upcoming VFW National Convention activities, etc.

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

VFW National Convention

VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION HOUSING – 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, 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.*

Soon to Arrive – Spring Edition VFW Birthday Cards – This spring, the VFW is mailing the 2024 Card Collection and other gifts in recognition of your commitment to the VFW and our nation's struggling veterans of all generations. More importantly, there is a special Independence Day card included in the package. Please sign and return it right away so that we can deliver your message of gratitude to one of America's service members or hospitalized veterans in time for Independence Day. It means so much to them to know their fellow veterans remember and care.

Right now, thousands of veterans are living with the physical and mental trauma of war. The physical wounds can be seen, but what about those veterans who suffer in silence? There are thousands of veterans who carry the invisible wounds of war, such as Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress.

The VFW wants to be sure when veterans from all wars and conflicts turn to us for assistance, we have the programs available for them. When you send back the signed card, please send a donation in honor of your fellow veterans who now face a long road to recovery from injuries sustained in battle. Your gift will mean that these programs stay available and strong for all veterans, right in *your* Department.

2024 Voice of Democracy Winners – It is almost time to announce the 2024 Voice of Democracy National Winner. We hope you will take the opportunity to [listen to the essay](#) given by your state winner as well as the winners from other states. The grand-prize winner will be announced on Monday, March 4, at the VFW Washington Conference in Washington, D.C. [Watch a livestream](#) of the Parade of Winners on March 4, at 6:00 p.m. (EST). If you are not currently a member of the VFW Friends of Freedom, you can sign up to receive these important alerts at vfw.org.

Relax This Tax Season With These Tips – Filing your taxes does not have to be painful if you follow these four simple steps. Make sure you are prepared. Consult with a professional if you need help navigating tricky laws. File electronically. And finally, plan for your future. With your finances top of mind, consider how to support the organizations most important to you. You can extend your legacy of kindness by including a gift to the VFW through your estate plan. Contact the VFW Planned Giving Office at 816.968.1119 or plannedgiving@vfw.org to learn more.

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

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!

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

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

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

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

125th National Convention – Louisville, Kentucky

As we plan for the **2024 National Convention**, there will be a new design for the **VMS Lapel Pins** for **2024-25 Program year!** VMS Chairs will be able to pre-order their pins and will be able to pick them up at the convention again this year. **Departments that are delinquent will not be able to pre-order.** Request forms will be provided sometime in March/April 2024.

VMS Program Chair Tools

The Veterans & Military Support Program Chair Tools webpage is updated every month. Link to the webpage is vfw.org/VMSPChairTools.

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 and 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.

Nominations for this award and the judging at the Post, District and Department level (if applicable) are completed. The Department Teacher winners that are received at National Headquarters will receive a VFW National citation for both the winning teacher and their school in each grade category. The National Teacher Award winners will be announced soon.

Order the Citizenship Education Teacher Recognition Citation from VFW Store, product #4320, vfwstore.org/products/23980. Present to all teachers nominated at all levels for the national award.

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.

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

Identity theft can occur at any time. Do not ignore any of these red flags:

- Inaccurate information on your credit report.
- Odd activity on your bank or credit statements. Often fraud starts with small withdrawals, so it is not as noticeable.
- Mail you were not expecting or hospital bills where you did not receive services.
- Losing a wallet with personal information in it.
- Phone calls from bill collectors for services you have not purchased.
- Receiving unexpected authentication codes.
- Unrecognizable income tax information.

ID Resolve helps you stop identity thieves in their tracks when they target your good name. Give yourself peace of mind knowing you are protected. Enroll at youridresolve.com/pp/VFW or call 1.833.203.9232.

"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.

NOMINATIONS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED FOR THE JOHN A. BIEDRZYCKI ACCREDITED SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YEAR FOR 2023-24

On Feb. 20, 2024, all Departments were notified that nominations for the John A. Biedrzycki Service Representative of the Year for 2023-24 are now being accepted.

We encourage every Department to submit a nomination to show that Department leaders are aware of the significant contributions your service office staff and service program make in your community every day.

ELIGIBILITY:

Eligible nominees include:

- VFW Department Service Officers
- VFW Assistant Department Service Officers
- VFW Claims Consultants/Representative/Analysts/Reviewers
- Any State or County VFW accredited representative
- Veterans Service Officers/Representatives

Individuals **NOT** eligible for this award are:

- VFW National Staff
- VFW Contractors
- Previous recipients of the Accredited Representative of the Year Award
- Individuals who do not have VFW accreditation

SELECTION CRITERIA:

1. Nominees for the annual award must have demonstrated exceptional efforts in assisting veterans and their families during the 12 months preceding the April 30 deadline.
2. A brief summary of no more than two pages is to be submitted which explains the who, what, when, where, and how the nominee's efforts are considered exemplary. Suggested items for consideration (but not limited to):
 - Number of individuals with VFW POAs assisted.
 - Community outreach conducted.
 - Examples of excellent customer service provided.
 - Meticulous use of Tyler Veterans Benefits (TVB) or another electronic claims processing system (specify system).
 - Submission of **TIMELY** monthly reports (if located in a VA regional office).
 - Number of VFW members recruited.

AWARDS:

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

Nominations can be submitted to taldana@vfw.org by no later than **April 30, 2024**.

ORDER YOUR VFW UNIFORM CAP TODAY! Officer changes will be taking place soon. The peak season for ordering caps is April to August, when the VFW Store processes thousands of cap orders. During this period, it can take up to 10 weeks to receive your cap. To order today go to vfwstore.org/category/vfw/uniformcapandnametags or call 833.839.8387.



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Show your community that you're #StillServing. Shop the VFW Store's collection of #StillServing apparel. vfwstore.org/category/vfw/stillserving