

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



**BULLETIN**

**Ocala, Florida**

**May 2024**

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

## **COMMANDER'S CHALLENGE "THE FINISH LINE IS IN SIGHT"**

With the possibility of historic growth ahead of us, it is time for every VFW Post to focus on recruiting and retention! We can make that 102% goal happen! From the beginning of May through the end of the membership year on June 30, the Commander-in-Chief is issuing one final membership challenge: the Post in each membership division that shows the highest membership increase in these last two months will receive a \$500 cash award and a \$500 gift certificate to the VFW Store.

This is going to count all dues-paying members: new members, renewing members, reinstates, and paying transfers! Get out there and push for that 102 % and beyond!

In addition, the Commander of the Department with the most Posts above 102 percent as well as the Commander of the Department with the highest percentage of their Posts above 102 % will each receive a special Commander-in-Chief windbreaker jacket to commemorate all the hard work shown by the Department through the year!

We have done amazing work so far, let us finish the membership year strong! This is our chance to make membership history. Do not miss your opportunity to be a part of it! It is time to make one final push this year to **MEET THE CHALLENGE!**

This contest will compare membership percentages from May 1-June 30, 2024. Applications and payments processed online before close of business will be credited that day, payments and applications made through the mail will be processed when received. Questions about this or other membership programs can be sent to [membership@vfw.org](mailto:membership@vfw.org).

## **DEPARTMENT "102 PERCENT" 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 Services (VTS) applied towards airfare, accommodations, and transportation for a trip of their own choice.**

## **NEW POST DEVELOPMENT & POST REVITALIZATION DEPARTMENT AWARD**

Congratulations to the Department of Pacific Areas in chartering a new Post 12223, Manila, Philippines, on April 2, 2024, and the Department of Texas for Chartering a new Post 12232, Portland, Texas, on April 16, 2024. If you have questions about Memstats, Post Query, or if you are trying to charter a Post and you have more than (15) members on a charter application, give me a call, Matt Nute at 816.968.1122. We have many resources available to help you.

**New Post Development and Post Revitalization Department Award:** For each new Post chartered, and/or revitalized, the Department Quartermaster will receive:

- A \$250 credit from the VFW Store to be used towards necessary materials for the new Post.

For details on this and all other All-American membership incentives view the Commander-in-Chief’s National Membership Program at [vfw.org](http://vfw.org) under *Membership Recruiting & Retention*. For any questions or further information, please contact the Membership Department via email at [membership@vfw.org](mailto:membership@vfw.org) or call us at 1.888.564.6839.

## UPCOMING TRAINING

Membership Monday training webinar will be on May 6, 2024, at 2:00 PM, CDT, Topic: **End of Year OMS Round-Up**. Check in to better understand OMS reports available to you and how to use them effectively going into the end of the year. 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/](https://facebook.com/VFWmembership/).

## LEGACY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

CHECK OUT OUR LEGACY LIFE VIDEO! Go to [vfw.org](http://vfw.org), click on JOIN, and scroll down to Legacy Life Membership and then click on the video. 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:**

<b><u>Levels</u></b>		<b><u>Posts</u></b>	<b><u>Departments</u></b>	<b><u>National</u></b>
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

Ben Vargas, Assistant Director, and Jason Couch, Grants Manager, have pursued other employment opportunities. Chris Johnson, formerly of VFW Programs is our new Grants Manager.

Brooke Brown, Director, Corporate & Foundation Relations has been working diligently to finalize VFW National Convention sponsorships. Commitments are currently at \$462,500 with additional prospects in the pipeline.

Contact: VFW Foundation Director of Donor Relations Richard Freiburghouse, [RFreiburghouse@vfw.org](mailto:RFreiburghouse@vfw.org).

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, VFW relies heavily on the generosity of its members and patriotic supporters. When members donate, 100% of their net donation goes directly back to support their department. *Please spread the word and give as generously as you are able.*

**Matching Gift Opportunity to Support the VFW's Programs** – The VFW has received an incredible opportunity from generous supporters. They have generously offered to triple your donation for the next 30 days! With a commitment of \$50,000 from their own funds, they aim to magnify the impact of your contribution. Recognizing that the true cost of war transcends the battlefield, they believe there are many others who share this understanding. They are reaching out to proud VFW members like you to rally behind fellow veterans of all generations who have been disabled by war.

Thanks to the unwavering dedication of members like you, we have been able to provide life-changing assistance to our deserving veterans. The VFW remains at the forefront of the fight for education, jobs, health care and an overall better quality of life FOR VETERANS! This presents an extraordinary opportunity to support veterans of all ages, *right within your department*. To ensure that every dollar of this remarkable offer is maximized, all gifts must be postmarked within 30 days.

**May is National Military Appreciation Month** – Is your Post planning a special event for Military Spouses Day on May 10, Peace Officers Memorial Day on May 15, Armed Forces Day on May 18, National Maritime Day on May 22, or Memorial Day on May 27?

If your Post is planning a special event this month to commemorate any of the above-mentioned special days, please share your success story with us. We will be looking for special stories from Posts like yours to feature in upcoming monthly e-newsletters and on [vfw.org/VFWatWork](http://vfw.org/VFWatWork) in the Story Archive. You may email your story to [success@vfw.org](mailto:success@vfw.org).

**DAF: Your Amazing Charitable Savings Account** – A Donor Advised Fund (DAF) is a great way to support your favorite organizations while minimizing the headache on your end. Once the fund is set up, you are able to recommend one-time or ongoing grants to qualified nonprofits like the VFW. This gives you extra time to make your decisions and only ONE charitable giving receipt to keep track of. Learn more at: <https://vfw.planmylegacy.org/daf-charitable-savings-account>. Still have questions? Get in touch with the VFW Planned Giving Office at 816.968.1119 or [plannedgiving@vfw.org](mailto:plannedgiving@vfw.org).

**Have You Heard About 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 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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://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 <https://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.

### 125<sup>th</sup> National Convention – Louisville, KY

As we plan for the **2024 National Convention**, we have already sent out the **2024-2025 VMS Lapel Pin notification and order form**. **You have until May 15, 2024, to place your order**. They will be available for pick up at our booth at the convention. **Payment cannot be made prior to July 1, 2024**. Please use the **VMS Donation** link on the Dashboard to pay for your order after **July 1, 2024 for the 2024-2025 program year**.

## VMS Program Chair Tools

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

## VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship"

The **2024 Fall Semester** is now closed. The 2025 Spring Semester will open August 1, 2024, and will only be available online at [vfw.org/Scholarship](http://vfw.org/Scholarship).

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

# 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](http://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.

**NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION PROGRAM.** This program is designed to provide recognition and awards to VFW members who volunteer their time to outside organizations. Recognition is in the form of certificates and/or lapel pins which are given to volunteers who have completed the number of hours prescribed for those awards. For more information, see the VFW Community Activities and Citizenship Education Chairperson's Guide or contact Tammy at 816.756.3390, ext. 6287 in the VFW Programs department for a nomination form.

## **VFW HONOR'S AMERICA'S TEACHERS DURING 2023–24 PROGRAM YEAR.**

Congratulations to the following teachers who were selected National winners for 2023-24:

Elementary School level – Eugene V. Struzik, III, Northwest Elementary School, Dodge City, Kansas, selected by VFW Post 1714, Dodge City, Kansas.

Middle School level – Monica Galloway, Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School, Laurel, Maryland, selected by VFW Post 9376, Clinton, Maryland.

High School level – Edward M. Graf, Somerset County Vocational and Technical High School, Bridgewater, New Jersey, selected by VFW Post 7858, Bernardsville, New Jersey.

National awards will be presented in July to each teacher during the VFW National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. Each of the winners will receive an all-expense-paid trip to the National Convention and \$1,000 cash award for professional development expenses (winners will receive a 1099-MISC); \$1,000 award to each winning teacher's school; plaques for both the winning teacher and his or her school. Each Department's recipients and their schools will receive a National Commendation citation, which will be sent to the Department Headquarters for presentation.

**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.

**IT'S SCHOLARSHIP TIME!** It is the perfect time to contact schools, youth groups, parent organizations and others with information about Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen. Schools are making curriculum decisions now and parents are thinking about scholarships.

Please remember that Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen are VFW programs supported by the VFW Auxiliary. It is inappropriate for a VFW Auxiliary to conduct a separate judging at any level. If you have questions regarding any of the above, please email [Jlinstra@vfw.org](mailto:Jlinstra@vfw.org) or call 816.968.1155.

**NEW VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT'S PEN THEMES.** The 2024–25 themes have been chosen by Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Alfred J. "Al" Lipphardt. The Voice of Democracy theme will be **"Is America Today Our Forefathers' Vision?"** and the Patriot's Pen theme will be **"My Voice in America's Democracy?"**

**NEW VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT'S PEN ENTRY FORMS.** The new 2024-25 Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen entry forms are now available on the VFW website.

For Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen brochures, posters, awards and more, visit the VFW Store: [vfwstore.org/category/programs/voiceofdemocracy](https://vfwstore.org/category/programs/voiceofdemocracy) for Voice of Democracy and [vfwstore.org/category/programs/patriotspen](https://vfwstore.org/category/programs/patriotspen) for Patriot's Pen.

**NOTE:** Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen posters are available!

**U.S. FLAG HALF-STAFF REMINDER.** The U.S. Flag should be at half-staff on Peace Officers Memorial Day on Wednesday, May 15.

**HALF-STAFF U.S. FLAG.** The U.S. Flag should be at half-staff on Memorial Day, the last Monday in May (federal holiday - half-staff until noon). Flags available at VFW Store [vfwstore.org/category/flags/usflags](http://vfwstore.org/category/flags/usflags).

**FLAG DAY, JUNE 14.** All VFW units are reminded to properly display the U.S. Flag on Flag Day, Friday, June 14 and to conduct a ceremony or program as feasible. You may contact the VFW Communications Department for a Flag Day speech. It is also suggested Posts should award the VFW Patriotic Citizen Award (Product No. 4385) for those who have daily displayed our National flag.

**“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](http://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.

## “Buddy”<sup>®</sup> Poppy

**NATIONAL “BUDDY”<sup>®</sup> POPPY DISPLAY CONTEST.** The time frame for registering and setting up the Department winning Buddy Poppy displays for the national judging at convention will be the same as usual. Department winning entries will be accepted for registration and may be set up beginning at 8:00 a.m., Saturday, July 27, until noon, Monday, July 29, 2024. Winning displays will be identified with appropriate ribbons on Tuesday morning and announced during the Business Session on Wednesday, July 31. **Please Note: Displays must be removed by noon on Tuesday, July 30.** Any displays left after this time will be removed by convention center personnel during the disassembly of the hall and be discarded.

**“BUDDY”<sup>®</sup> 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 POLICY AND PROCEDURES:

- 1) Departments must order poppies through OMS.
- 2) All claims of non-receipt of a Buddy Poppy order must be made within 60 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 tin 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](http://vfwstore.org/category/programs/buddypoppy) or by calling Member Service Center at 1.833.839.8387.

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 of Anniversary poppies due to increased cost and the small quantities we sell of Anniversary Poppies. Based on the past four years' sales, we have sufficient inventory for the next 2.5 years of the Gold, 4 years of Diamond and 51 years of the Silver.

## National Veterans Service

### **POST SERVICE OFFICER SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION:**

In accordance with the National Veterans Service Policy & Procedure, one of the duties of the Department Service Officer (DSO) is to conduct at least one VFW Post Service Officers School of Instruction for all Post, County and District Service Officers in the Department, during each VFW year. After conducting such training, DSOs shall provide an annual Post Service Officer School of Instruction report to both their Department Headquarters and the Director, National Veterans Service by the end of June. The report shall include the date and location of the training, topics taught, and a roster of attendees. The report should be addressed to the Director, National Veterans Service, and be sent via email to [taldana@vfw.org](mailto:taldana@vfw.org).

## MEMORIAL DAY

This year, we will be celebrating Memorial Day on Monday, May 27, 2024. Originally called "Decoration Day," Memorial Day is observed to honor those who died while serving in the U.S. military.

While many Americans will celebrate the holiday with their families, countless VFW-accredited service representatives will be spending their day volunteering at Memorial Day events answering questions about VA benefits and assisting our Nation's veterans and their families in their quest to obtain their earned entitlements. Whether having a presence on the National Mall over a weekend of remembrance or visiting an unaccompanied hospitalized veteran in a VA Medical Center, the value a Service Officer brings to the lives of others cannot be underestimated.

## CLAIMS SHARKS UPDATE

The VFW continues its fight against unaccredited representatives that charge hefty fees to "assist" or "consult" with veterans filing for their VA claims benefits known as "Claims Sharks." In response to the many inquiries, we have received from veterans regarding claim shark invoices and bills, VFW National staff have put together a templated letter that may help veterans dispute these illegal charges. The letter must be sent by the veteran to the claim shark in response to any bills or invoices received. Though this letter may help to dissuade future collection attempts, it is not a guarantee that the debt will be resolved. This letter is not a substitute for legal advice. Any debt resolution advice should be provided by a qualified attorney.

To obtain a copy of this letter, please contact VFW Quality Assurance Representative Todd Gruchalla at [tgruchalla@vfw.org](mailto:tgruchalla@vfw.org).

## Administrative Operations

Post Election Reports must be submitted no later than June 1 to the National Headquarters. We encourage all Post Quartermasters to use the online Election Report process featured in the Online Membership System (OMS), which is located behind the member's "LOGIN" at [vfw.org](http://vfw.org).

The 2024-25 Department Roster is now an Online Membership System (OMS) submitted report. The interactive report will cover reporting of all Department elected and appointed officers and committee chairperson. In addition, the District Election Report is also contained within the Online Membership System (OMS). Portions of the District report will feed into the Department report (i.e., the District Commander position).

Adjutants and Quartermasters can access the roster by logging into their OMS account under the "Election Report" drop down in the left-hand navigation pane. Membership numbers of each elected/appointed officer and/or chairperson are needed to complete the report. Your cooperation in completing the roster immediately following your convention is appreciated. Any additions, corrections or changes will be submitted through OMS as they occur throughout the year.