

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



BULLETIN

Ocala, Florida

November, 2022

“Florida Rocks”

Commander-in-Chief Tim Borland has issued a challenge to all VFW Posts for the month of November 2022!

For this, we are focusing on the important issue of retention - making sure our members stay with the VFW. We will be counting renewals and reinstates toward the contest goal. If a continuous or lapsed member pays their dues - whether for annual or Life membership - they will be counted for this contest.

At the end of November, the Post that leads each membership division will receive \$500 deposited into the Post account! Now is the best time to contact your members to let them know that we're thankful they are a part of our great organization, and to make sure they continue their membership because Every Veteran Counts.

This contest will count existing VFW members (those with a membership number in our records) who pay their dues between Nov. 1 and Nov. 30. Members processed through the Online Membership System before close of business will be processed that day; membership applications sent in via fax or mail will be processed when received.

2022-23 NEW RECRUITING AWARD

One New Member Pin - As part of this year's membership incentives, Commander-in-Chief Tim Borland wants to drive home the message that EVERY VETERAN COUNTS. To support this message, every VFW member who recruits a new member will receive a special One New Member recruiting pin to show the world that they're doing their part to help our organization grow in strength and reach our membership goals.

DEPARTMENT "100 PERCENT" INCENTIVE

Any Department that attains 100% in membership by close of business on May 1, 2023, will be entered into a random drawing. The Commander (plus guest) and the Quartermaster (plus guest) for the Department that is selected will each receive:

- **\$2,500 voucher through Veterans Travel Service (VTS) applied towards airfare, accommodations, and transportation for a trip of their own choice.**

EARLY BIRD AWARD - VFW LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

The top three Post Commanders and Quartermasters in each division on Jan. 1, 2023, will receive:

- **A \$1,000 stipend to be used toward attending the VFW Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.**

DEPARTMENT EARLY BIRD INCENTIVE

For every Department that achieves 92% in membership by Jan. 1, 2023, the Department Commander will receive:

- **A Henry Golden Boy .30-30 Caliber Rifle (VFW Tribute Edition if available) or a credit voucher of equal value for use with Veterans Travel Service (VTS) or the VFW Store.**

2022-23 MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM:

The 2022-23 Membership Program is available online at vfw.org, under MY VFW, scroll down to Membership Quick Links, click on Membership Recruiting and Retention. You will see the 2022-23 VFW National Membership Program in blue letters.

MEMBERSHIP OBJECTIVES

As the membership year has begun, keep in mind our Membership Objectives are also written in the 2022-23 Membership Program.

- For everyone to recruit at least one new member and then mentor that member
- Increase membership drives and/or events
- 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

If you were to look at the National Membership report, you will see ten Departments in the 90 percentiles for membership. This is great news and a great beginning look at how the first quarter of this membership year is going! The good news is the VFW is recruiting new members and even better news, retention levels are trending higher. The year is really starting to get rolling as evidenced by the chartering of two new Posts: Post 12213 in Magnolia, TX and Post 12214 in Corvallis, OR. Congratulations to those Departments! If you have more than 15 members ready to charter a new Post, give me a call! We have resources to help get you over the top! If you have Posts needing revitalization, call us at 816.968.2788 or email coreyhunt@vfw.org and we will 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 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

The next Membership Monday training webinar will be on Nov. 7, 2022, at 2 PM, CST, Topic: TBD.

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/VFWmembershipHQ/.

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

Participating BURGER KING® franchise restaurants will continue to raise funds through Nov. 11 in support of the VFW's Unmet Needs program. Now in its 16th year, the annual campaign encourages BURGER KING® customers to donate at the drive through by rounding up to the nearest dollar or \$1 or more in the inside dining room. Since 2007, BURGER KING® franchisees have raised more than \$6.9 million in support of the program. 700+ BURGER KING® franchisee locations are participating in this year's campaign. [Find a participating BURGER KING® restaurant near you.](#)

Questions? Contact Ben Vargas, Assistant Director at bvargas@vfw.org or 816.968.2720.

The 2022 Sport Clips Help A Hero fundraising campaign with in-store donations and other individual wrap-around fundraising events is ongoing through Nov. 12 at over 1,800 Sport Clips locations. We also invite you to participate in the 2022 Virtual Help A Hero Walk. Sign up at: app.mobilecause.com/vf/HERO.

Questions on how to create a team and sign-up? Contact Brooke Brown, VFW Foundation Corporate Relations at bbrown@vfw.org or 816.868.3156.

The VFW Foundation grant cycle has opened for VFW Posts and Auxiliaries. Two grants are available through this program, the Community Support Grant and District Corporate Partnership Grant. Grant applications and guidelines for the #StillServing grants can be found at vfw.org/Grants. Questions may be directed to Jason Couch, VFW Foundation Grants & External Relations Coordinator at JCouch@vfw.org.

The Uniting to Combat Hunger campaign is gearing up for the holiday season. The VFW Foundation's Uniting to Combat Hunger Grant application period is now open for VFW Posts and Auxiliaries. The application may be found at vfw.org/UTCH. Questions may be directed to Jason Couch, VFW Foundation Grants & External Relations Coordinator at JCouch@vfw.org.

Contact: VFW Foundation Manager Richard Freiburghouse at rfreiburghouse@vfw.org.

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 19% 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.*

VFW National Veterans Service Quarterly Supporter Newsletter – The quarterly update on what the VFW National Veterans Service is doing for veterans will arrive this month. You will see stories of how the VFW in D.C. is fighting for veterans' rights and legislation affecting veterans. We also share stories of VFW Service Officers assisting veterans in obtaining their VA benefits – all because of your support of this vital program. If you, or a fellow veteran, are in need of assistance in filing a VA claim, please visit vfw.org/NVS.

VFW 2023 “Fly the Flag” Calendar – The VFW is proud to let you know you may soon receive a special edition 2023 “Fly the Flag” Calendar. We created this special patriotic 2023 “Fly the Flag” Calendar in recognition of your loyal membership and generous support of the VFW. We have also included a bonus gift selection, which features a beautiful VFW “American Songbirds” Calendar. We hope these special gifts inspire you to show your patriotism by displaying the United States flag, especially on the days marked in your calendar, to show your support for all veterans who have fought to keep us free. You can visit heroes.vfw.org/Flag to print a free flag poster to display. *Your donations* will help *your VFW Department* serve veterans in need throughout the year. Veterans in your Department are counting on you!

2022 Veterans Day Matching Gift Campaign to Friends of Freedom Online Community – Last month Friends of Freedom members received an email with exciting news! A generous friend of the VFW agreed to match every donation we receive up to \$50,000 until Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2022! This is an incredible opportunity for your contribution to go twice as far to honor the brave men and women who have dedicated themselves to our country. No matter the amount, your generosity will have twice the impact for service members and their families – please help us honor these brave men and women by giving as generously as you can! Watch your inbox for this incredible email so that your gift can go twice as far!

Free Estate Planning Resources From the VFW – Most people know the importance of a will or estate plan. But did you know only 44% of adults ages 55+ and only half that for adults ages 35-54 have one in place! The VFW is providing a free Personal Estate Planning Kit, which you can download at vfw.org/PlannedGiving. Once you have made sure your family and loved ones are taken care of, we invite you to consider a gift to the VFW in your will. It is simple and takes only a few words to provide support for future generations of veterans. Learn more by contacting the VFW Planned Giving Office at 816.968.1119 or email plannedgiving@vfw.org.

Have You Heard About the VFW's Partners in Patriotism? – Commander-in-Chief Timothy M. Borland 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 the 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

VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship"

The Spring 2023 application is available online at vfw.org/Scholarship with a deadline date of Nov. 15, 2022.

REMINDER: Visit your local Sport Clips for a haircut from now until Nov. 12, 2022 and donate to the VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" program. Your donation will provide scholarships to service members and veterans. **On Veterans Day**, Nov. 11, Sport Clips will donate \$1 to the VFW for every haircut given at more than 1,800 locations nationwide. Please contact Mark Herron at mherron@vfw.org if you have any questions about the Help A Hero Scholarship Program.

VMS Lapel Pin Payments

REMINDER: If your Department ordered the 2022-23 VMS Lapel Pins and have yet to pay for them, please do so as soon as possible. We have 15 Departments that still need to pay. Payment can be made via the **Dashboard** using the "VMS Donation" link in the upper right-hand corner of the webpage. If you have any questions, contact Mark Herron at mherron@vfw.org.

VMS Donation for All-American

Donating to the VMS Programs can be done on the VFW Dashboard by going to the “**VMS Donation**” link at the upper right-hand corner of the screen. Your \$100 or more donation meets the eligibility criteria for All-American in this category. **Thank you for your support!**

Veterans & Military Support Program Chair Tools

Contact forms, monthly reports, applications, and program reports are located at the **Veterans & Military Support Program Chair Tools** webpage. This is our one-stop-shop for all your Chair needs. Please click the link below to access the webpage.

[Access the Veterans & Military Support Program Chairperson Tools webpage now](#)

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

VMS Donation Reports

Donation reports are received on **most Fridays** and are uploaded to the **Dashboard** on the **same day**. The period of these reports is from the **previous Friday** to **current Thursday**.

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.

BELLS OF PEACE 2022. On Nov. 11 at 11:00 a.m. local time ... Americans everywhere and across the nation will toll bells in remembrance of those who served and those who sacrificed in the war that changed the world...

--Sign up to participate (once you have signed up, we will send you updates and notices).

--Recruit others including organizations to pledge with you.

--Find out more and see the special landing page for information and **RESOURCES:**

bellssofpeace.org

ALL-AMERICAN DASHBOARD. Military Assistance Program grants have been launched to show Departments and Posts how much in grant assistance that 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 on the KPI tools section.

Please encourage Posts to read the 2022-23 Membership program. Many Posts don't understand they need to sign up five new Action Corps subscribers, create a Facebook page, two separate partnering events, along with a 10% increase in Community Service Impact from last year. They must submit reports through the dashboard to gain credit.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT’S PEN ESSAY CONTEST DEADLINE REMINDER. The deadline for the annual Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen essay contests is quickly approaching. The students must have their completed entry form with the (audio and/or written) essay submitted to their local participating VFW Post by **Oct. 31, 2022**. Each corresponding deadline for Post, District and Department to have their entries to the next level are Nov. 15, 2022, for completion of Post judging; Dec. 15, 2022, for completion of District judging; Jan. 10, 2023, for completion of Department judging and the Department winners are due to National Headquarters by **Jan. 15, 2023**.

Please ensure that the entry forms are filled out completely and that the appointed individual at the Post is available to receive the entries and answer questions. As we get closer to the deadline, the more students and parents will be reaching out trying to find their local participating Post so we want to ensure they can make contact.

Simply visit vfw.org/#login, log in to My VFW, then click on **VFW Training & Support** under the **Member Resources** heading, then click on Community Service & Youth Programs and Activities, then click on **Chairperson Guides** under the **Additional Resources** heading. Here you will find all program materials.

Please remember that Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen are VFW programs supported by the VFW Auxiliary. It is inappropriate for the VFW Auxiliary to conduct a separate judging at any level.

If you have questions regarding any of the above, please email nlopez@vfw.org or call 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 \$171,000, 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 VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT’S PEN THEMES. The 2022–23 themes have been chosen by Commander-in-Chief Timothy M. Borland. The Voice of Democracy theme is “Why is the Veteran Important?” and the Patriot’s Pen theme is “My Pledge to our Veterans.”

NOTE: “NEW” Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pen posters are now available!

Anyone (including students, parents, teachers, and chairpersons) can download and print the student entry forms for Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen by visiting the below links:

Voice of Democracy: vfw.org/VOD/

Patriot’s Pen: vfw.org/PatriotsPen/

For Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen brochures, posters, awards and more, visit the VFW Store: vfwstore.org/category/programs/voiceofdemocracy for Voice of Democracy and vfwstore.org/category/programs/patriotspen for Patriot’s Pen.

VETERANS IN THE CLASSROOM MONTH IN NOVEMBER. VFW and VFW Auxiliary members are encouraged to volunteer in their schools to talk about their military and home front experiences to students. Invite your local military recruiter to join you to talk about military service today. Additional information can be found in the 2022-23 VFW Community Activities and Citizenship Education Chairperson’s Guide.

Simply visit vfw.org/#login, log in to My VFW, then look under Member Resources, click on **VFW Training & Support**, then click on **Community Service & Youth Programs**, then look under **Additional Resources**. Here you will find all program guides, and on the same page are all other program materials.

Participate in this activity during the week of Veterans Day, which is part of “National Veterans Awareness week,” as designated by Congress. Find Pledge of Allegiance pencils and coloring books, plus other citizenship education tools at the VFW Store vfwstore.org/category/programs/citizeneducation.

“NEW” 2022-23 SMART/MAHER VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD PROGRAM REMINDER. This year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars wants to recognize the nation’s top elementary, junior high and high school teachers (teaching at least half of the school day in a classroom environment) who teach citizenship education topics regularly and promote America’s history, traditions, and institutions effectively through this program.

All Post-level nominees should provide a one-page resume as a minimum or up to five pages as a maximum of documentation of their teaching experience (for example: references, news articles, etc.) and a head-and-shoulder photo of themselves, if available. These items will be forwarded on to the district, if applicable, then to the Department with the completed entry forms.

Nominations for this award should be in the hands of the local Post by Oct. 31, so they may begin their judging. The Post Teacher Award Chairperson must submit their winners on to their District, if applicable, by Nov. 15. Once the District has completed their judging, they will submit their winners to their Department Headquarters by Jan. 1. The Department must select a single candidate, in each category, for the awards and submit the winners to VFW National Headquarters by Feb. 1.

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 on to the Department Adjutant/Quartermaster to submit it to National Headquarters. You can locate additional information by logging in to vfw.org and searching under “My VFW” in the Training & Support section.

The VFW’s Department Citizenship Education Teacher Award includes a citation for both the winning teacher and their school.

The VFW’s National Citizenship Education Teacher Awards include: three national \$1,000 awards for the top K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 teachers for professional development expenses; \$1,000 award to each winning teacher’s school; plaques for both the winning teacher and school; and an all-expense-paid trip to attend a VFW National Convention.

VFW SPECIAL PROJECT PROGRAM. This program was put in place to recognize VFW units for creating and completing unique and extraordinary community service projects.

Record book entry nominations that are found to be complete and well-substantiated should be endorsed by the Department Adjutant or VFW Department Community Activities Chairperson and forwarded to National Programs Department. Deadline for entries is April 30 of each year.

Every Post Special Project receiving the Award of Excellence in the May judging will be entered in the Fred C. Hall Memorial Outstanding Post Special Project Competition. Complete information can be found in the VFW Community Activities and Citizenship Education Chairperson’s Guide.

VFW NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVANT AWARDS. New this year, the dispatcher category has been added. Departments are asked to submit four nominees (one for each career area) to the VFW Programs office no later than Feb. 1, 2023. 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

All Department Public Servant Citations must be requested through the “VFW Department Public Servant Award Request Form” through Formstack. VFW Programs staff will email the form link to Department Adjutants and Quartermasters. Deadline for Department submissions to National is Feb. 1, to guarantee receipt for Department Convention presentations.

Each Department will receive their four 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 general public and especially other law enforcement personnel, firefighters, EMTs and dispatchers, 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.

Simply visit vfw.org, log in to My VFW, then look under Member Resources, click on **VFW Training & Support**, then click on **Community Service & Youth Programs**, then look under **Public Servant Program**.

NOTE: NEW First Responder Medal is available through the VFW Store. To review this item, please click on the following link: vfwstore.org/products/32134.

CONDUCT A VETERANS DAY PROGRAM ON NOV. 11. Organize a community event on Veterans Day honoring all veterans. For a ceremonial procedure, refer to the information found in the VFW Community Activities and Citizenship Education VFW Chairperson’s Guide. If you should need a Veterans Day speech, please go to: vfw.org/MY-VFW/Patriotic-Holiday-Speeches. Click here for Veterans Day merchandise vfwstore.org/category/more/specials/veteransday.

HALF-STAFF U.S. FLAG ON DEC. 7. Public Law 103-308, passed in 1994, designates Dec. 7 as “National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day” and requests the flag of the United States to be flown at half-staff (sunrise to sunset) in honor of the individuals who lost their lives on that day. To order a flag, go to vfwstore.org/category/flags/usflags.

“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.

“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 8 weeks in advance of your distribution date. Be sure to specify a date by which the poppies are required, do not use “ASAP.”

BUDDY POPPY UPDATE: National Headquarters conducted a review of the Buddy Poppy policy and procedures and implemented the following changes effective May 20, 2021:

- 1) If you do not receive your order within 8 weeks of placing it with your Department, please contact National Headquarters to report that you have not received the order.
- 2) If you do not report a missing order 3 months after the 8-week processing time, the order will NOT be replaced free of charge, and you will have to resubmit your order.

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.

Contact information: BuddyPoppy@vfw.org or 816.756.3390, ext. 6722 for any questions or concerns.

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. The anniversary poppies are approximately three times as expensive for us to produce, but because of the small quantities we deal in, we do not pass those costs on to the Posts. 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 and processed the same as the red poppies. Annotate on the order to National that it is for anniversary poppies and specify which one.

2023 VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) Volunteer of the Year Awards

The VFW is now accepting nominations for the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Volunteer of the Year awards. Nominations are for two awards (one male and one female), which will be presented during the 2023 VAVS National Advisory Committee meeting in Denver, Colorado. **Nominees for this award must participate in established VAVS assignments, serve as a Regularly Scheduled (RS) Volunteer and meet one of the following criteria:**

- Volunteer with hospitalized Veterans
- Volunteer with Veterans at Outpatient Clinics
- Volunteer with Veterans in Community Living Centers
- Volunteer with homeless Veterans
- Volunteer with Veterans and Veterans groups in the community
- Host Veterans functions in the Lodge, Post, Chapter, i.e., Memorial Day, July 4th, and Veterans Day observances, etc., that qualify as a VAVS assignment
- Host Veterans functions outside the Lodge, Post, Chapter, i.e., fishing trips, day at the races, sporting events, etc., that qualify as a VAVS assignment
- Visit Veterans confined to their homes as a VAVS assignment
- Adopt-A-Veteran

VFW Department Commanders, Adjutants, Adjutant/Quartermasters, and Hospital Chairmen, please select your two candidates (1 male and 1 female) and be on the lookout for the official email announcement which will include the nomination forms. This email is expected to be sent out on or about Oct. 28, 2022. Once you are ready to submit, nomination letters with all supporting documentation should be sent to: jmoss@vfw.org. **Deadline for submission is Nov. 30, 2022.**

VA Health Care Open Enrollment Period Begins

VA is expanding health care eligibility for certain veterans as directed by the recent passage into law of the *Honoring our PACT Act*. A one-year open enrollment period will be available for eligible Vietnam veterans, Gulf War veterans, and Post-9/11 veterans. Eligibility is based on dates and locations of service, regardless of disability claim status. Once the open enrollment period has closed, veterans from these groups will be eligible for VA health care as part of a phased process depending on discharge date. Learn more about your [eligibility](#) and [apply today](#).

COLA Increase for Veterans and Survivors

The president signed VFW-supported [H.R. 7846](#), *Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2022* into law. Certain VA benefits including disability compensation, clothing allowances, and dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors will receive the same cost-of-living adjustment as Social Security benefits. The announced increase is to be 8.7 percent, which is higher than in recent years to account for inflation. The adjustment will go into effect on Dec. 1, 2022, and the first checks to reflect the new rate will be on Dec. 31, 2022. [Read more.](#)

President Signs Veterans Legislation into Law

President Biden signed into law two VFW-supported bills. The [Solid Start Act](#) requires the VA to reach out to newly separated veterans three times within their first year of separation to check in and help connect them to VA programs and benefits. It is open to all newly separated veterans regardless the type or characterization of service. Finally, [Supporting Families of the Fallen Act](#) will increase the automatic maximum coverage under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance and Veterans' Group Life Insurance from \$400,000.00 to \$500,000.00.

VA Closes Gap for LGBTQ+ Veterans and Survivors

The VA will now allow certain survivors of LGBTQ+ veterans to apply for survivor benefits, such as Survivors Pension or Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. Due to past bans on same-sex marriages and previous VA marriage requirements, many survivors of LGBTQ+ veterans were not eligible for survivor benefits. Surviving spouses can now establish they had a "marriage-type" relationship by providing documents such as joint banking statements, joint purchase of a house, tax returns, insurance forms, lay statements, and more. These benefits are not retroactive, but those eligible who apply in the next year will receive benefits backdated to Oct. 11, 2022. Contact a [VFW Service Officer](#) for assistance filing for benefits. [Learn more.](#)

VFW Store

One of the most effective and visible ways to show your pride in the VFW, and raise awareness of programs in your community, is to purchase branded merchandise from the VFW Store. Your VFW shirt, cap or pin will spark curiosity in others. That, in turn, can lead to meaningful conversations about our organization. To shop for VFW logoed merchandise, click vfwstore.org/category/more/specials/vfwlogo?page=1&size=100.