

FROM SEA  
TO  
SHINING  
SEA

HONORING

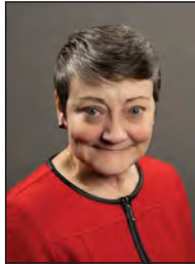
*Veterans*

WHO KEEP US FREE



# 2025-2026

## *Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary National Officers*



**PRESIDENT** Lois Callahan (center)  
**SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT** Donna K. Mills (upper left, then counter clockwise)  
**JUNIOR VICE-PRESIDENT** Kim Harney  
**CONDUCTOR** Janey Feher  
**CHIEF OF STAFF** Karlene Beams  
**CHAPLAIN** Sandra Uzell  
**SECRETARY-TREASURER** Ann Panteleakos



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Welcome to the 2025–2026 Program Year. ***From Sea to Shining Sea, Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free*** will be our overall theme, while a lighthouse will be the symbol that lights the way to honoring America's veterans, assisting their families and supporting our communities.

In planning for this journey, I spent a great deal of time thinking about all the special mentors who have given so much of their time, patiently sharing their experience and preparing us all for success. From Americanism to Youth Activities, from Guard to President — on all levels those mentors have led the way and taught us well. Today, it is time for us to become leaders, guiding new members and ensuring the success of our organization well into the future.

As we begin this new adventure, keep the lessons of our mentors in mind and much like the girl in the Starfish Story (see below), remember that no matter how insurmountable the task may sometimes seem, what we accomplish is important. Whether we are advocating for veteran-focused legislation, volunteering in hospitals or educating and encouraging young men and women, we cannot give up; we must not be deterred. Mother Teresa illustrated this beautifully when she said "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop." What we do is essential. What we do matters.

Another life changing opportunity will be offered this year in our special project. With your help, we will be expanding and enhancing the VFW Auxiliary National Continuing Education Scholarship. We hope to increase the scholarship amounts. By supporting this project, we will be able to increase the educational opportunities of our members and families. Join me on this journey together; our ideas, energy and passion can and will make a difference in so many lives.



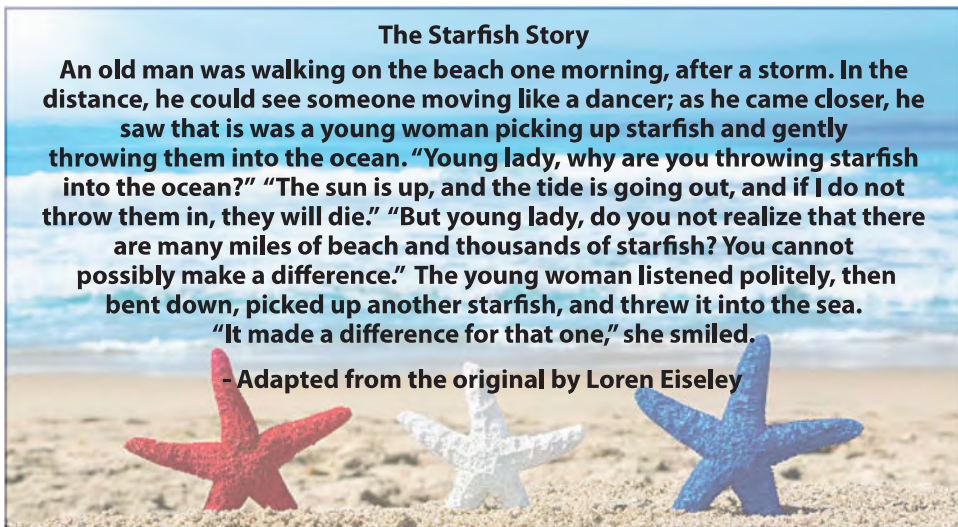
***Be the Lighthouse in Someone's Storm.***

Lois Callahan  
National President

#### **The Starfish Story**

**An old man was walking on the beach one morning, after a storm. In the distance, he could see someone moving like a dancer; as he came closer, he saw that it was a young woman picking up starfish and gently throwing them into the ocean. "Young lady, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" "The sun is up, and the tide is going out, and if I do not throw them in, they will die." "But young lady, do you not realize that there are many miles of beach and thousands of starfish? You cannot possibly make a difference." The young woman listened politely, then bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it into the sea. "It made a difference for that one," she smiled.**

**- Adapted from the original by Loren Eiseley**





## National President Lois Callahan's 2025-2026 Special Project

### VFW National Auxiliary Continuing Education Scholarships

Continuing Education Scholarships are offered to assist members and their immediate family members who wish to further their education by pursuing a college degree or career direction at a vocational/technical school.

[vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships/continuing-education](http://vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships/continuing-education)

Help our members and their immediate family members train for a career, learn new skills and improve their lives.  
Your contributions increase the amount of awards available.

Select the "Make a Gift" tab and then  
"National President's 2025-2026 Special Project in MALTA."  
Or mail a check to National Headquarters earmarked  
"National President's 2025-2026 Special Project."



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# CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE

**Every Department has the opportunity to join the Circle of Excellence.** The criteria are listed below. National Headquarters will track this information. Consider this a checklist for the Program Year of important items and deadlines that must be met. Membership is an important factor and will be encouraged by the Conference Membership Coaches, who will be working with Department Membership Chairmen to achieve the membership portion of the Circle of Excellence criteria. Log into your MALTA Profile, Duties, Circle of Excellence to complete your criteria form. **Your Department MUST achieve 250 points or more to enter the Circle of Excellence.**

## Criteria for entering the Circle of Excellence:

### 1. Growth in Membership:

Membership Standings by June 30, 2026 based on June 30, 2025 final membership statistics. Membership will be based on figures listed on the CMR - Paid, Canceled & Deceased report in MALTA.

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
110		Over 101% in membership, not including deaths (current percent)
100		100% Plus in membership, not including deaths (current percent)
90		100% Plus in membership, including paid deaths (paid percent)
80		97-100% in membership, including paid deaths (paid percent)

### 2. Comply with Bylaws/Administrative Follow-Through:

A) All installation reports MUST be received at National Headquarters by July 31. If not, the Department MUST submit a request for a suspension by that date for time to mentor and rejuvenate the Auxiliary.

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		Installation report received at National Headquarters by July 31.
5		Suspension report received at National Headquarters by July 31.

B) All Auxiliaries MUST be bonded by August 31. If not, the Department MUST submit a request for a suspension by that date to allow time to mentor and rejuvenate the Auxiliary.

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		All Auxiliaries bonded by August 31 or request for suspension.
5		Suspension report received at National Headquarters by August 31.

C) The Department MUST have submitted a Council-approved audit and budget by October 1 or request an extension on or before that date. Once extension is met, points will be awarded.

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		Council-approved audit and budget by October 1 or request an extension.

D) Department, District and Auxiliary Officers (Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers) dues MUST be paid by December 31 or submit an email or letter to relieve any non-paid Officers to National Headquarters by January 5.

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		Dues of Officers at all levels paid by December 31 or email or letter to relieve non-paid Officers to Headquarters by January 5.

# CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE

## Criteria for entering the Circle of Excellence (continued):

- E) The Department MUST have submitted the names of their VAVS Representatives to National or request an extension on or before July 31.

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		Submit VAVS documentation to National Headquarters by July 31.

- F) Auxiliaries must have 10 paid members by February 1.

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
5		Departments MUST notify National by February 4 of their plan to handle Auxiliaries with less than 10 members.

### 3. Department Communication:

- A) The Department MUST communicate with every Auxiliary at least quarterly in one or more of the following ways: email, mail, phone, website, newsletter, E-Newsletter or General Orders.

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		Communicate with Auxiliaries throughout the year.

- B) The Department Chairman of each National Program MUST send at least four (4) promotionals and/or communications to their National Ambassador by April 30. 10 points for submitting four (4), 15 points for submitting six (6).

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
15		Six (6) or more promotions of National Programs.
10		Four (4) or five (5) promotions of National Programs.

### 4. Training:

The Department MUST hold at least one training session\* on each of the following:

*\*Training session can take place at a Department School of Instruction, meeting, Convention or other organized training events. These trainings can be combined into one session.*

- A) How to Identify an Unhealthy Auxiliary

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		Department to host training session on how to identify an unhealthy Auxiliary by November 30.

- B) National Programs and Organizational Knowledge (e.g. Bylaws, Ritual, & MALTA)

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		Department to host training session on National Programs and Organizational knowledge by November 30.

- C) Hold a training (for items not listed in 4 A & B) to benefit members (e.g., invite an accredited Veterans Service Officer (VSO) to speak at your meeting, etc.).

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		Hold a training to benefit members by April 30.

## CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE

### Criteria for entering the Circle of Excellence (continued):

#### 5. Programs Participation and Working Together on a Common Goal:

A) The Department MUST complete and submit the online Year-End Report.

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
25		Department MUST submit the online Year-End Report by May 10.

B) What did your Department do to engage every Auxiliary in the work of the organization?

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		Department President MUST describe what the Department did to engage every Auxiliary in the working of the organization on the Circle of Excellence Report by May 10.

C) All Auxiliaries MUST complete at least one project, activity or donation that benefits veterans by April 30.

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		All Auxiliaries MUST complete at least one project, activity or donation that benefits veterans by April 30. If not, the Department MUST contact the Auxiliary by that date for explanation.

D) The Department must hold a joint VFW and VFW Auxiliary Department-level project in addition to current National Scholarships programs. Project must be completed by April 30.

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		The Department must hold a joint VFW and VFW Auxiliary Department-level project in addition to current National Scholarships Programs. Project must be completed by April 30. Project to be described in the Circle of Excellence Report by May 10.

E) Any Auxiliary that is below 100% in membership on January 31st MUST be contacted by a Department Officer to determine a need for mentoring and/or other assistance. The Department Officer must contact the Auxiliary on or before April 15th. The Department Officer must then report to the Department President by April 30th. The Department President will describe what was done to assist them in the box below.

*(If all Auxiliaries and Districts in your Department are at 100% on January 31, you will automatically receive 10 points.)*

Possible Points	Actual Points	Criteria
10		A Department Officer is to contact any Auxiliary below 100% in membership on January 31, on or before April 15. Department Officer is to report to the Department President by April 30. Outcomes are to be described in the Circle of Excellence Report by May 10.

# CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE

## **Circle of Excellence Awards:**

### **AWARDS FOR DEPARTMENTS AND DEPARTMENT CHAIRMEN**

1. \$500 to the Department for meeting all of the criteria listed on pages 1-3 and entering the Circle of Excellence information.
2. Circle of Excellence Year Patch for Department Banner Ribbon.

### **AWARDS FOR DEPARTMENT PRESIDENTS**

1. Circle of Excellence medallion.
2. Circle of Excellence tie or scarf.
3. Circle of Excellence pin.

# OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AWARDS

## FOR DEPARTMENT CHAIRMEN 2025-2026

The Outstanding Performance Awards are given each year to recognize hardworking Departments and Department Chairmen who have given an extra amount of effort.

### **The Outstanding Performance Award:**

- \$200 will be awarded to the one Outstanding Department in each of the ten (10) Program Divisions\*.
- A keepsake will be awarded to the Department Chairman of the one Outstanding Department in each of the ten (10) Program Divisions\*.

### **Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award:**

- \$100 will be awarded to the one Outstanding Department in each of the ten (10) Program Divisions\*.
- A citation will be awarded to the Department Chairman of the one Outstanding Department in each of the ten (10) Program Divisions\*.

### **11 Programs Judged:**

- Americanism
- Auxiliary Outreach
- "Buddy"® Poppy & VFW National Home
- Extension & Revitalization
- Historian & Media Relations
- Hospital
- Legislative
- Membership
- Scholarships
- Veterans & Family Support
- Youth Activities

### **The Selection:**

The National Program Ambassadors of each Program listed will select the recipients. Department Program Chairmen will be judged on quality, creativity and originality of all communications, promotions and events. When a Department Program Chairman does anything to promote or publicize the Program to the members and the community, they should send a copy of the item or communication or a description of the event or presentation to the National Program Ambassador.

### **Required to qualify:**

The Department Program Chairman must have sent a minimum of four (4) mailed and/or emailed promotions to the members in their Department and must send copies to the National Ambassador by April 30, 2026.

Winners will be announced, and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention. If neither the winner nor Department leadership are in attendance, awards will be mailed to recipients from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters upon return from the VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

*\*Program Divisions will be announced at the start of the Program Year.*

2025-2026

# NATIONAL PROGRAM AMBASSADORS

AND

# NATIONAL PROGRAM AWARDS

**\*Please note: The Program Book is printed prior to the National Convention. Depending on the Bylaw decisions made at Convention, section numbers may be different from the printed version.**

# AMERICANISM AMBASSADOR/ PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR



## DIANA RUSSELL-MILTON

3725 Lily Hill Court  
Antelope, CA 95843-5426  
916-761-2406  
diana9americanism@gmail.com

*We can do all things in the light,  
that strengthens us in the waves.*

### Respect For Our Flag

Patriotism begins at home. Let's show our patriotism this year and love for the American Flag. Many years ago, when joining the VFW Auxiliary, it reaffirmed my love for this county. It made me proud to be an American, flying the American Flag and seeing the flags on the Auxiliary meeting floor. Every time I march in, carrying the American Flag, I was walking with my head up and proud.

Americanism is an unfailing love of country, loyalty to its institutions and ideas, a desire to secure the blessing of liberty and posterity and an undivided allegiance to the Flag.

As a member of the Auxiliary, it is our duty to show our patriotism by supporting veterans, their families, volunteering in our communities, promoting patriotism and flying the American Flag.

Honoring and respecting the American Flag is significant for several reasons. It is a tribute to the sacrifices and service our veterans made, and it is a symbol of our national unity and identity.

***I'm A Proud American.*** Why are you a proud American? How do we show our pride in America? Who are the proud Americans? ***Show Your Patriotism.***

### Flag Education

Organize educational programs and workshops within your community to teach the proper etiquette for displaying and handling the American Flag. Partner with local schools, civic organizations and other groups to spread awareness about the significance of the Flag and its role in American history.

Establish a program for the respectful disposal of worn or damaged Flags. Set up collection points at local VFW posts or partner with other organizations to ensure that old Flags are properly retired according to the guidelines outlined by the U.S. Flag Code.

### Promote Patriotism

**Patriotic Symbols and Traditions:** Educate others about the meaning and importance of patriotic symbols and traditions, including the American Flag, the National Anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance. Share tips on how to properly display and honor these symbols in daily life.

**Spotlight on National Holidays:** Provide information and ideas for celebrating national holidays like Memorial Day, Independence Day and Veterans Day. Include tips on how to organize and participate in local observances that reflect the significance of these holidays.

### POW/MIA Remembrance

Prisoner of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) Remembrance Day is a solemn occasion dedicated to honoring the bravery and sacrifice of those who have endured captivity or remain unaccounted for while serving our nation. This day is crucial for recognizing the profound hardships faced by POWs, who suffered extreme conditions and personal anguish while separated from their loved ones. It also highlights the ongoing commitment

to account for those who are still missing, ensuring that their sacrifices are never forgotten. By observing this day, we reaffirm our collective responsibility to remember these heroes, support their families and uphold the values of honor and respect for all who have served in the defense of freedom.

### **Importance of Patriotic Instruction**

The Patriotic Instructor is responsible for educating members about the history, symbolism and proper etiquette related to American patriotic symbols, particularly the American Flag. This education helps members understand the significance of these symbols and how to honor them appropriately. By sharing discussions, focused on Americanism in your Auxiliary meeting, the Patriotic Instructor can teach others to foster a deeper appreciation for the values and traditions that the VFW Auxiliary stands for. This role is crucial in promoting patriotism and ensuring that members uphold the principles of respect and honor for the nation.

### **Tools**

**Social Media Campaigns:** Use social media platforms to share stories, events and patriotic messages. Use the current hashtags associated with the VFW Auxiliary to show other members how your Auxiliary is promoting patriotism. #AuxiliaryPatriotism.

### **Program QR Codes**

QR Codes are used on just about everything. Members can use it as a talking point to explain about the VFW Auxiliary Americanism and patriotism. Most people will open it up and then they can find important information on the Americanism Program.





## **Flag Education • Promote #AuxiliaryPatriotism • POW/MIA Recognition • Star Family Recognition**

The following definition of "Americanism" was originated by the Commanders-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, United Spanish War Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the National Commanders of the American Legion and the Disabled American Veterans of the World War at a conference held in Washington, D.C., in February 1927:

"Americanism is an unfailing love of country; loyalty to its institutions and ideals; eagerness to defend it against all enemies; undivided allegiance to the Flag; and a desire to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity."

### **Patriotic Instructors/Americanism Chairman**

The Patriotic Instructor educates members about the proper salute to the U.S. Flag, as well as the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. They also take the time to understand the VFW Auxiliary Ritual and the Federal Flag Code. They help members to understand the traditions and ceremonies of the organization. The *Understanding Auxiliary Traditions* help sheet and video are available in MALTA Member Resources.

For detailed information on Auxiliary traditions, rituals and patriotic ceremonies, reference the VFW Auxiliary *Podium Edition: Bylaws and Ritual*.

### **Flag Education**

A large part of demonstrating Americanism and patriotic spirit is respecting and properly caring for the U.S. Flag. Flag etiquette covers everything from proper display of our Flag to acceptable conduct around this symbol of our nation.

For more information about Flag etiquette, the history of our Flag and to read the U.S. Flag Code, visit [vfw.org/community/flag-etiquette](http://vfw.org/community/flag-etiquette).

### **Respect for the Flag - Engaging the Community**

- Flag Education in Schools – Educating our youth about patriotism is an important step on the path to good citizenship. Encourage members of your Auxiliary to volunteer in schools and educate youth about the importance of respecting our Flag. Volunteers can visit individual classrooms or give a presentation at a school assembly. For more resources, see MALTA Member Resources.
- Recognition of Outstanding Community Flag Display – When a community member, business or organization takes the care and time to display our "Stars and Stripes," it reinforces patriotism to the entire community. You may recognize this display of patriotism by presenting a certificate of appreciation from your Auxiliary.
- Flag Retirement Ceremonies – These ceremonies honoring our Flag serve as one of the most beautiful forms of respect for our country. This is the perfect way to involve the whole family of Auxiliary and VFW members. Flag retirement ceremonies can also serve as an event involving the entire community.
- Promote Patriotism – Celebrating Patriotic Holidays. Patriotic holidays are an opportune time to involve the whole family and bring community attention to your Auxiliary. Patriotic holidays and days of note can serve as the perfect way to show that your Auxiliary supports patriotism, veterans and their families as a top priority. A list of these dates can be found in MALTA.

For more information and guidance on Americanism and Patriotism, including Patriotic Instructor duties, patriotic days, Americanism Helpful Hints, branches of service birth dates, military flags order of precedence and Star Family recognition, see MALTA Member Resources.

### **Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Program**

Each year the VFW recognizes three exceptional teachers - one each from the elementary, junior high and high school levels - for their outstanding commitment to teach Americanism and instill patriotism in their students.

For more information, visit:  
<https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/teacher-of-the-year>

Patriotic items and educational materials are available for purchase through the VFW Store at 1-833-VFW-VETS or online at [vfwstore.org](http://vfwstore.org).

## AMERICANISM PROGRAM AWARDS

### **Awards for Auxiliaries:**

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event displaying or educating others about proper ways to display and respect the American Flag.
  - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event educating others about proper ways to display and respect the American Flag.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Americanism Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department Americanism Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Americanism Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

### **Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:**

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Americanism Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions who demonstrates exceptional dedication and creativity in promoting the proper display and respect for the American Flag during VFW Auxiliary meetings.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 9.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

# AUXILIARY OUTREACH AMBASSADOR



**SARA MANKE**

22232 P-Drive S  
Homer, MI 49245-9649  
517-652-4507  
auxoutreach25@yahoo.com

*As you shine your light, the world grows bright,  
you are a beacon of love.*

Since 1914, the VFW Auxiliary has united individuals from all walks of life with a common purpose: to improve the lives of veterans, service members, their families and our **COMMUNITIES**.

Auxiliary Outreach is all about what we can do to help our **communities**. Perception is reality and the VFW and Auxiliary have made major strides in the last several years to try to change the perception of what our communities think we are all about. Many members of the community still view the VFW as that smoky bar where veterans sit telling old war stories.

With the intention of increasing our membership and promoting our Programs we need to become a positive presence in our local communities. Form a **partnership** with another organization to help make their event successful. Remember you cannot plan the event or give money to the event. You are simply there to volunteer your time. For example, if you volunteer at a Relay for Life event, your walk in the relay is not reportable, however you registering walkers or passing out water to walkers is reportable. If you give blood during a blood drive, that is not Auxiliary Outreach, however if you register donors and work the event with the Red Cross that is Auxiliary Outreach.

There has been some confusion since this Program began. Seasoned members remember the days we had Community Service, but this is **NOT THE SAME**

**PROGRAM.** Think of it this way, it is not volunteering for, but rather volunteering with. It is a donation of time, not money. The goal is work hand-in-hand with other organizations, getting our members out there while you wear something that says Auxiliary.

**Here are a few basic steps in making your Auxiliary Outreach Program successful.**

- Find local groups and organizations in need of assistance, ask what your Auxiliary can do to help.
- Discuss the project and vote at your meeting to accept your volunteer hours. Some organizations you partner with may have ongoing activities so you would just need to make a motion at the start of the year for that, others have events they plan in advance so that would need a motion for each new event.
- Form the partnership, at least one Auxiliary member needs to work the event.
- Wear your Auxiliary attire (shirt, hat, name badge, lanyard, jacket)
- Report the details, remember only report what doesn't fit under any other Program.

## **Finding partnership opportunities:**

- Ask your members: most of us belong to numerous organizations. Don't forget to reach out to your members who aren't able to attend your meetings, they may want to partner with an organization and report their hours to you.
- Prepare a letter of introduction and send it to all groups or organizations in your community. Let them know who we are and what we do. Invite them to reach out to us if they need volunteers for any upcoming events.

- 

Did you know that almost every month has a day or week recognizing volunteerism? Please spread the word about these days and consider doing something special. I will be covering these in my Promotions.

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## AUXILIARY OUTREACH PROGRAM

### Building Partnerships • Auxiliary Participating in Outreach

Auxiliary Outreach is partnering with organizations for the benefit of your community or its institutions. It is a donation of time, not in-kind or monetary donations. Auxiliary Outreach can enable VFW Auxiliaries to engage with their local communities, learn about their needs and collaborate to address them.

#### **Auxiliary Outreach can:**

- Be performed by people of any age, skill set or ability level.
- Benefit any group of people such as children, senior citizens and those with disabilities.
- Benefit animals, the environment and public spaces.
- Be done in communities of all types and sizes – rural, suburban and urban, small and large.

#### **We partner to make a difference in our community, but we also receive benefits including:**

- Helping others
- Learning new skills
- Meeting new people
- Developing a stronger sense of purpose
- Personal growth

#### **Boost Visibility**

Be visible and show your pride in the VFW Auxiliary by wearing Auxiliary-branded attire when you participate in Auxiliary Outreach. A shirt, jacket or hat with the Auxiliary emblem can start a conversation about the Auxiliary and what we do. It is also a great way to show members out volunteering in our communities and not just in our Post Homes.

#### **Reporting**

While emphasis is placed on our core VFW and Auxiliary Programs, we realize Auxiliaries also participate with other community organizations. Auxiliaries can now report and be recognized for such community work through the Auxiliary Outreach Program. Projects may be done by the Auxiliary alone or with the VFW Post. Collectively, all our volunteer hours need to be counted to effectively show the importance of the local VFW and VFW Auxiliary to the community.

#### **Outreach and the VFW Auxiliary**

When an Auxiliary partners with an organization outside our own, it should be considered Auxiliary Outreach if the project was approved by the Auxiliary and recorded in the meeting minutes prior to the project.

On rare occasions, such as a natural disaster or emergency community need, the project may be voted on after the fact. (When the Auxiliary votes to partner with another organization and only one member is able to show up, it still counts as Auxiliary Outreach.)

See the next page and MALTA Member Resources for examples of what does and does not qualify for Auxiliary Outreach.

Auxiliary Outreach is for projects NOT AFFILIATED with VFW or VFW Auxiliary Programs.

Volunteer work that is performed for the benefit of the Post or Auxiliary is NOT considered outreach service.

## QUALIFIES

Spending time in a local homeless shelter kitchen serving meals, bussing tables or cleaning up.

Partnering with the police or fire department on bicycle or home safety training class.

Your Auxiliary approves helping a local cancer group set up their event or manning a booth.

Partnering with the garden club to clean up local parks.

Help a youth group collect food donations for the local food pantry.

## DOES NOT QUALIFY

Taking comfort items to the local USO.

Donating trophies to a youth sports group.

Hosting a luncheon/dinner for a local organization.

Sending an Auxiliary check to support a charity that organized a walk-a-thon or run.

Collecting clothing and comfort items for homeless veterans at the Post Home. (This would be Veterans & Family Support.)

Passing the collection basket at church services.

## AUXILIARY OUTREACH PROGRAM AWARDS

### Awards for Auxiliaries:

1. Most outstanding Auxiliary Outreach activity and/or event that is shared on social media using #AuxiliaryOutreach.
  - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that shares the most outstanding Auxiliary Outreach activity and/or event using #AuxiliaryOutreach during the current Program Year.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Auxiliary Outreach Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department Auxiliary Outreach Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Auxiliary Outreach Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

### Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Auxiliary Outreach Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of the Auxiliary Outreach Program.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 14.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

# "BUDDY"® POPPY & VFW NATIONAL HOME AMBASSADOR



**SANDRA JEFFRIES**

**2058 Paisley Drive  
Haw River, NC 27258-9763  
336-686-0456  
bubblez331@gmail.com**

*From the shining lighthouse we want to  
honor the dead by helping the living.*

From the shining lighthouse we want to honor the dead by helping the living. This is done by distributing "Buddy"® Poppies within our communities; donations collected are used to aid veterans, service members and their families who are in need. While the Cross of Malta is a recognizable symbol of our organization, the "Buddy"® Poppy is a symbol that reminds Americans of the sacrifices made by our veterans while protecting our freedoms. This small red flower, inspired by the John McCrae poem "In Flanders Fields," has been adopted by veterans' organizations around the world as a reminder of what our veterans have sacrificed. There are now two options for the "Buddy"® Poppy; they are the traditional "Buddy"® Poppy and the VFW also has a metal "Buddy"® Poppy that is available. This new metal Poppy is nice for a collar or suit jacket.

## **History of the "Buddy"® Poppy**

Distributing Poppies dates back more than a century, when it became the VFW's official memorial flower in 1922.

While you are distributing Poppies, you can hand out VFW National Home brochures and explain that this is one of the Programs supported by their donations. The "Buddy"® Poppy and VFW National Home go hand in hand!!

Here are some important things to consider when preparing for your "Buddy"® Poppy distribution:

- Identify potential volunteers within your Post and Auxiliary and gather them together for an informational meeting explaining the purpose of the "Buddy"® Poppy campaign.
- Plan for each volunteer to distribute a certain number of Poppies.
- Determine how many Poppies you should order based on the number of volunteers.
- Choose distribution dates. Memorial Day and Veterans Day are always a popular time, but any time is a good time to distribute this memorial flower.
- Stake out key distribution venues in advance. Choose high traffic areas and determine the number of workers you need to cover the locations. Ideal locations include storefronts, office or factory entrances and recreational areas. Make sure you get permission from the business owners before setting up shop. Post flyers, with permission, around town in key areas such as the post office, coffee shops, gas stations, etc. It will let people know when and where they can get a "Buddy"® Poppy. If your local newspaper has a community calendar section, be sure to let the editor know about two weeks in advance that you'd like to place your Poppy announcement on the calendar.
- Encourage your volunteers to smile and be enthusiastic during the distribution. If they appear friendly, it will project a good image for the VFW and Auxiliary.
- Make sure your volunteers wear their VFW or Auxiliary gear.

- Remind your volunteers that they are not “selling” Poppies but distributing them with the hope of getting donations. If you follow these simple steps, your “Buddy”® Poppy campaign is sure to be a success.

### Where to get Poppies?

- Contact your VFW Post to order Poppies. Each “Buddy”® Poppy purchased by a Department for distribution contributes to the following:
  - One (1) cent goes to the VFW National Home
  - One (1) cent goes to the VFW National Headquarters Veterans Service Fund
  - One and a half (1.5) cent goes to the Department’s Veterans Service Fund
- Request the order form from your VFW Department Headquarters at least two to three months (8-12 weeks) in advance of your distribution date.
- Brochures, “Buddy”® Poppy distribution supplies and promotional items can be purchased from the VFW Store at [vfwstore.org](http://vfwstore.org) or by calling 1-833-VFW-VETS.

### Contests

For rules and questions about the “Buddy”® Poppy Display Contest, refer to MALTA Member Resources.

### VFW National Home

The VFW National Home honors and supports veterans and service members by aiding their families. Let’s focus this year on promoting the VFW National Home’s Military & Veteran Family Helpline. To learn more visit the VFW National Home website: [vfwnationalhome.org/get-help](http://vfwnationalhome.org/get-help)

### Membership

The VFW National Home Centennial Membership Program began April 1, 2024, and will end December 31, 2025. For just \$100, you can join this special program by upgrading your existing membership or becoming a new member. As a

Centennial Life Member, you’ll receive a special centennial membership pin and membership card that will allow you to display your affiliation with pride. Plus, you’ll enjoy discounts on souvenirs and apparel that are not available to regular members.

### Promoting the VFW National Home

This year, the focus is to create awareness about and education of eligibility and who qualifies for help from the National Home. Let’s promote this way to help veterans and their families in our Departments.





## **"BUDDY"® POPPY & VFW NATIONAL HOME PROGRAM**

**"Buddy"® Poppy Education/Outreach • National "Buddy"® Poppy Display Contest**

**VFW National Home Education**

### **"Buddy"® Poppy**

#### **"Buddy"® Poppy**

The "Buddy"® Poppy has been an integral part of the VFW community for 100 years. As the VFW's official memorial flower, the Poppy represents the blood shed by American service members. It reiterates that we will not forget their sacrifices.

The Poppy movement was inspired by Canadian Army Col. John McCrae's famous poem, "In Flanders Fields." Poppies were originally distributed by the Franco-American Children's League to benefit children in the devastated areas of France and Belgium following World War I.

The VFW conducted its first Poppy distribution before Memorial Day in 1922, becoming the first veterans' organization to organize a nationwide distribution. In February 1924, the VFW registered the name "Buddy"® Poppy with the U.S. Patent Office. A certificate was issued on May 20, 1924, granting the VFW all trademark rights in the name of Buddy under the classification of artificial flowers. No other organization, firm or individual can legally use the name "Buddy"® Poppy.

#### **Honor the Dead by Helping the Living**

These small but mighty memorial flowers have raised millions for the welfare of veterans and their dependents. The Poppy Program also provides financial assistance in maintaining state and national veterans' rehabilitation and service programs and partially supports the VFW National Home.

#### **How to Order**

Contact your VFW Post to order Poppies. Please Request the order at least two to three months (8 to 12 weeks) in advance of your distribution date.

#### **"Buddy"® Poppy Items**

"Buddy"® Poppy apparel, distribution supplies and promotional items can be purchased from the VFW Store.

**VFW Store**  
**406 West 34th Street**  
**Kansas City, MO 64111**  
**1.833.VFW.VETS (1.833.839.8387)**  
**[vfwstore.org](http://vfwstore.org)**

#### **"Buddy"® Poppy Distribution Tips**

"Buddy"® Poppy drives can be hosted at any time during the year – not just Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Try doing one at least once a quarter. If you have enough volunteers, host a monthly Poppy drive.

- Talk to your VFW Post about a joint drive and splitting the proceeds.
- Contact your city/town clerk's office to see if a permit is required for your distribution event.
- Get permission from the desired distribution location(s) store managers/owners prior to promoting your "Buddy"® Poppy distribution event.
- Make sure all Auxiliary members know the time, day and place of your distribution event.

- Share information about your distribution event with your local paper and on social media. Post flyers in high-traffic areas such as grocery stores, coffee shops, the post office, etc.
- Ask for assistance from youth groups such as VFW and/or Auxiliary youth, JROTC, after-school, Scouts, Young Marines and faith-based clubs.
- Ask volunteers to wear Auxiliary- and/or VFW-branded clothing to both promote the Auxiliary and VFW and connect the distribution of poppies to the organization.
- Remind volunteers they are NOT SELLING “Buddy”® Poppies but DISTRIBUTING them for donations. Never refuse someone a “Buddy”® Poppy because they are unable to donate. A “Buddy”® Poppy honors all veterans.
- See the VFW’s “Buddy”® Poppy Chairman’s Guide for further assistance in setting up a “Buddy”® Poppy drive, as well as other helpful resources. The guide can be found in MALTA Member Resources.
- At the Auxiliary and Post level, all proceeds from Poppy drives are to be placed in the Relief Fund with receipts and expenditures in accordance with the Treasurer’s Guide and the *Podium Edition: Bylaws and Ritual*.
- Distribution of “Buddy”® Poppies should be included in every Auxiliary, District or Department activity including parades, patriotic events, membership drives, bingo or trivia nights, etc.
- There are many creative ways to distribute the “Buddy”® Poppy including window displays, posters, wreaths, remembrance walls, hats, event centerpieces, etc.

## **Two Versions of the “Buddy”® Poppy Are Available**

- Traditional artificial flower “Buddy”® Poppy
- Tin tab “Buddy”® Poppy

## **Anniversary “Buddy”® Poppies**

Special traditional artificial flower Poppies are available to VFW Posts celebrating their 25th, 50th, 75th and 100th anniversaries. The poppies are the same design as traditional poppies but come in silver for the 25th anniversary, gold for the 50th anniversary and diamond (iridescent white) for the 75th anniversary. VFW Posts currently in their 100th anniversary can order any color and as many as they need.

## **Official National VFW “Buddy”® Poppy Display Contest**

- Takes place annually at National Convention.
- Displays are judged in three (3) categories.
- This is an official National VFW contest.

Contest rules and judging guidelines are available in MALTA Member Resources. This is a VFW contest and the rules cannot change. If you have further questions after reading the rules and guidelines, please contact Lynn W. Rolf III at [lrolf@vfw.org](mailto:lrolf@vfw.org).

## **Unofficial “Buddy”® Poppy Display Contest VFW National “Buddy”® Poppy Awards**

Find details about the Unofficial “Buddy”® Poppy Display Contest & VFW National “Buddy”® Poppy Awards in MALTA Member Resources.

## VFW NATIONAL HOME

The VFW National Home was founded in 1925 as a place where families left behind by war—mothers and children, brothers and sisters—could remain together, keeping the family circle intact even when their serviceman didn't come home. The VFW National Home serves as a living memorial to America's veterans by helping our nation's military and veteran families during difficult times.

Over the years, the National Home has met the changing needs of America's military and veteran families. Through it all, one thing has remained constant: the National Home's commitment to honor our nation's veterans and service members by providing help and hope for their children and families.

### **The VFW National Community**

The VFW National Home located in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, has helped military and veteran families who need a fresh start. Families can live there rent-free for up to four years and have access to professional case management services, on-site licensed child care, life skills training, tutoring and other educational services, as well as recreational and community service opportunities. The National Home's community is open to families of service members, veterans and—recognizing that the effects of war can last for generations—descendants of members of the VFW and the VFW Auxiliary. The family can include one or both parents with one or more children.

Families find healing in a safe and peaceful environment of tree-lined streets with 42 single-family homes and facilities such as a gym, library, computer and science labs, day care center, playgrounds, fishing pond, hiking trails and more.

In accepting families to the program, only one thing is asked of them: They must be committed to making changes in their lives. To remain at the National Home, they are expected to demonstrate consistent progress toward family goals. Together, in partnership with the whole family, the National Home is dedicated to helping each family reach its full potential

For more information and to find help visit [vfnationalhome.org](http://vfnationalhome.org) and click on the Get Help button.

The VFW National Home, a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, is governed by a seventeen (17) member Board of Trustees made up of VFW and VFW Auxiliary members, who as Life Members of the National Home, are dedicated to the mission of the National Home.

### **Health & Happiness Fund**

One way the Auxiliary supports the National Home is through gifts of 10 cents per member to the Health & Happiness Fund. Contributions are critical since the campus and its programs receive no government funding. The Health & Happiness Fund supports the following at the National Home:

- Maintenance of Auxiliary-sponsored buildings
- Emergency repairs and renovations
- Christmas and graduation gifts

Donations can be made online in MALTA or by mail.

Making a gift is easy in MALTA. Gifts can be made by an entity (Auxiliary, District, Department) or by individuals.

### **To Make a Gift online in MALTA on behalf of an entity (Auxiliary, District and/or Department)**

- The Treasurer logs in to MALTA
- Go to the Duties tab for the entity you are making the gift on behalf of
- Select Make a Gift shortcut icon
- Click on Make a Gift blue box
- Choose program and enter amount
- Click on I hereby agree to the terms and conditions of purchase
- Click on Pay Now

Entity gifts are done by ACH, if it asks you for Credit Card information you are not on your duties tab.

### **To Make a Gift online in MALTA on behalf of yourself, as an individual with a personal gift**

- Visit [vfwauxiliary.org](http://vfwauxiliary.org) and select MALTA Member Login
- Log into MALTA
- Select Make a Gift from the Main Menu
- Click on Make a Gift blue box
- Choose program and enter amount
- Enter credit card information
- Click on I hereby agree to the terms and conditions of purchase
- Click on Pay Now

### **To donate by mail, send a check earmarked Health & Happiness to:**

VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters  
Attn: Health & Happiness Donations  
406 W. 34th Street, 10th Floor  
Kansas City, MO 64111

### **VFW National Home Life Membership and Associate Life Membership**

Another way to offer support is by becoming a Life Member of the National Home. There are two types of membership. VFW and VFW Auxiliary members and organizations are eligible to become Life Members. Life Members may vote for the Trustees

who represent their National Home District and approve any proposed changes to the bylaws and articles of incorporation. Please be sure the VFW National Home has your correct name and email address; the bylaws and ballots are emailed.

Any individual or organization wishing to support the VFW National Home's mission can become an Associate Life Member. Associate Life Members do not have voting privileges. For more information on membership, visit [vfwnationalhome.org/membership](http://vfwnationalhome.org/membership).

### **Other Ways to Give and Offer Support**

- Become a Home Front Hero
- Purchase a Tribute Brick or a Centennial Garden Brick
- Purchase an item for the Tribute Park
- Gifts from your IRA, stocks and securities
- Amazon Wish List
- Create awareness by wearing VFW National Home apparel and distributing promotional materials.

### **VFW Auxiliary Sponsorship**

The VFW Auxiliary has been involved in the National Home in myriad ways since the very beginning; as vocal supporters, fundraisers and volunteers. The National Home was the Auxiliary's first continuing Program and we named our first official National Home Chairman in 1927.

A few of our projects include:

- Hospital, now the Health & Education Center
- The Margaret A. Armstrong Guest Lodge and Memory Chapel
- Early Education Center
- "Home Life" building, now the Community Center, with a gym, auditorium, kitchen, elevator and additional office space
- National Home's new Welcome Center

For more information, see MALTA Member Resources or visit the National Home's website at [vfwnationalhome.org](http://vfwnationalhome.org).

## "BUDDY"<sup>®</sup> POPPY & VFW NATIONAL HOME PROGRAM AWARDS

### Awards for Auxiliaries:

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event with their VFW Post to educate their community about the VFW "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy.
  - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most outstanding activity and/or event with their VFW Post to educate their community about the VFW "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy & VFW National Home Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy & VFW National Home Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy & VFW National Home Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

2. Most outstanding activity and/or event that creates awareness and education of eligibility and who qualifies for help from the VFW National Home and promoting it within their Department to help veterans and their families.
  - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most outstanding activity and/or event that creates awareness and education of eligibility and who qualifies for help from the VFW National Home and promoting it within their Department to help veterans and their families.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy & VFW National Home Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy & VFW National Home Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy & VFW National Home Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

## **"BUDDY"<sup>®</sup> POPPY & VFW NATIONAL HOME PROGRAM AWARDS**

### **Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:**

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy & VFW National Home Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of activity and/or event with their VFW Post to educate their community about the VFW "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

2. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department "Buddy"<sup>®</sup> Poppy & VFW National Home Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of activity and/or event that creates awareness and education of eligibility and who qualifies for help from the VFW National Home and promoting it within their Department to help veterans and their families.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

3. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 19.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

# EXTENSION & REVITALIZATION AMBASSADOR/ NATIONAL CHIEF OF STAFF



**KARLENE BEAMS**  
**National Chief of Staff**

**201 Maplewood Court**  
**Hot Springs, AR 71913-5628**  
**501-762-2001**  
**chief25\_26@aol.com**

*You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf!*

The Chief of Staff may serve as the Extension, Revitalization and Mentoring Chairman. So, what is a Department Chief of Staff and how important is this appointment to the success of the Department?

As Chief of Staff, you are the important assistant to the Department President. You should be that extra set of eyes and ears we wish we all had. The Chief of Staff will be a coach, counselor and mentor to all levels of leadership in the Department. They must be knowledgeable in all facets of the Auxiliary including Bylaws, Programs and Mentoring for Leadership.

The Chief of Staff works with the Department President to identify the warning signs of an Auxiliary in trouble before situations occur. The Chief of Staff should be informed of all issues, good and bad, in the Department. The Chief of Staff should train the District Presidents or Official Representatives to recognize Yellow or Red Flag issues early in the Program Year. When they know what a healthy and functioning Auxiliary should be, they can report immediately any concerns to the Department President.

The Chief of Staff has tools available to aid in maintaining strong and healthy Auxiliaries in MALTA. Promote the usage of these resources, such as Building on the VFW Auxiliary Foundation. Promoting the use of MALTA will lead to more informed members.

The Chief of Staff is instrumental in the success of each Department. Their support assures that goals are attained, Auxiliaries are instituted, members are trained and problems are solved. Healthy Auxiliaries provided better service to our veterans, their families and communities. With the permission of the Department President, the Chief of Staff can assist where needed for the good of the Department.

*From Sea to Shining Sea - Honoring Veterans  
Who Keep Us Free*

The VFW Auxiliary was built on a strong foundation based on the traditions established in 1914. With those traditions comes a sincere promise to safeguard the future of the Auxiliary. Each Department President has appointed a Department Chief of Staff to serve with them closely to ensure that Auxiliaries remain strong, enthused and loyal to our organization. These traits allow for the Auxiliary to remain proud, patriotic and energetic, creating members who honor and protect our veterans and their families. Our men and women in uniform have made a similar promise to our nation when they took their oath and promised to safeguard the future of our nation. They remain strong, patriotic and proud, so that we may enjoy freedom. Our foundation is solid – now it is up to us to remain strong.

The Extension & Revitalization Program can benefit every member of the Auxiliary through education. Keeping informed and becoming knowledgeable of our traditions and subsequent Programs will help us to mentor our members and prepare them for leadership roles. This is the heart of what we do in this Program.

## **Healthy Auxiliaries vs Struggling Auxiliaries**

### **Green Flag - Healthy Auxiliaries**

Auxiliaries that are healthy “are good to go.” They have utilized or referred to the Healthy Auxiliary Tool Kit found in MALTA. They have met the five (5)

essential requirements for an Auxiliary to be healthy. There are seven resources to assist Auxiliaries in identifying and solving issues within the kit. A Green Flag Auxiliary would be an excellent choice to mentor struggling Auxiliaries.

### Yellow Flag - Struggling Auxiliaries

Auxiliaries that are struggling will need mentoring. It is up to the Department Chief of Staff, when requested by the President, to look to assist the Auxiliary. The District President or Auxiliary Representative must be honest in the assessment when completing the visit form after a visit to an Auxiliary. They have firsthand knowledge of the Auxiliary and must communicate any concerns to the Department President and/or Chief of Staff. This situation could be failure to meet any one or more of the five (5) essentials of an Auxiliary, but also a subtle sign such as not attracting new members, failure to complete Programs reports, not assisting veterans and families, no new Officers, or failure to attend District and Department meetings or trainings events.

The completed Official Visit forms should be shared with the Chief of Staff to peruse and perhaps pick up a "Yellow Flag" signal. As soon as struggle is reported, the Department Chief of Staff needs to work closely with the Department President and observe what is happening on the Auxiliary level and be ready to act.

### Performance Improvement Plan

The process of arriving at a resolution would be that a **Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)** is put in place. A PIP Committee (not a suspension committee) is assigned to meet with the Auxiliary President, Secretary and Treasurer and under certain circumstances an individual member or members with the issues to discuss and develop a Performance Improvement Plan. This is the time to **OBSERVE** the Auxiliary and offer **MENTORING**. The President will pick the member or team that fits the Auxiliary – there is no one size fits all. The PIP Committee takes the lead and gradually gets the Auxiliary involved in correcting the issue; thus, the Auxiliary would not have to be put on suspension and the PIP Committee would advise the Department President that the Auxiliary could now be considered healthy. The PIP Committee should be able to attend their meetings and get them back on track. This is a critical time for an Auxiliary and

the spirit of kindness is an absolute must. This is **REVITALIZATION** at its peak.

Red Flag – the Auxiliary will be put on suspension as a time to step back and regroup. Suspension simply means there is some work to do to get the Auxiliary where it needs to be. The hope is that the Auxiliary will recover and come back stronger and better than before.

### Extension

We need to make certain that the current Auxiliaries are in good working order. It is also important to make presentations to unaffiliated Posts and when possible, to institute new Auxiliaries. An Auxiliary cannot exist without a Post and there must be a 2/3 vote of the Post to get started. Positive and knowledgeable Auxiliary presenters are important when addressing a Post. The Chief of Staff should be aware of any unaffiliated Post presentations and attend if possible. Always ask the Post Commander for permission to describe the benefits of an Auxiliary to the VFW Post. Extension tools and presentations are available in MALTA Member Resources. Once the Post has approval to establish an Auxiliary, the Department President will appoint an organizer to work with the Post.

### Mentoring

Training and educating members to be future leaders is why we mentor. We must ensure that the legacy of the VFW Auxiliary continues through strong and healthy Auxiliaries comprising members who are prepared to take on leadership roles to continue to move the VFW Auxiliary forward. Do not allow Auxiliaries to stay "anchored to the past" – technology is a wonderful tool that gives us the ability to reach so many members, which then allows us to continue the tradition and promise to take care of our veterans and their families. Blend the past with the present to guarantee our future. Mentors are counselors and cheerleaders. Focus on positive attributes and encourage those while offering guidance and training.





## EXTENSION & REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

### **Maintain and Strengthen Current Auxiliaries • Present to Unaffiliated Posts**

### **Establish New Auxiliaries • Recognize Red-Flag Auxiliaries**

The Chief of Staff has a critical leadership role in our organization. One of the responsibilities of the Chief of Staff is to provide guidance and resources to VFW Auxiliaries so they can ensure that Auxiliaries are healthy and successful.

Chiefs of Staff work with District Presidents and the Department President to maintain current Auxiliaries. They encourage members, promote teamwork and provide guidance during challenging times such as suspension, consolidation or even the loss of a Charter. Chiefs of Staff also work closely with their Department President and organizers to establish new Auxiliaries.

### **5 Essentials of an Auxiliary**

The National Organization requires only five (5) things of an Auxiliary:

1. Auxiliaries should have at least ten (10) business meetings per year. Five (5) members in good standing (of that Auxiliary) shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
2. Dues should be paid by at least ten (10) members on or before February 1 of the current year.
3. Quarterly audits by Trustees must be submitted.
4. Officers elected, installed and reported to National Headquarters no later than June 30. This generates the bond application via email.
5. The offices of President and Treasurer MUST be bonded by August 31.

### **Establishing New Auxiliaries**

Whether a VFW Post decides on its own it wants an Auxiliary or whether an Auxiliary member or non-member sees the potential for a new one, the steps for creating an Auxiliary are the same.

1. A VFW Post must vote by 2/3 majority to have an Auxiliary. (An Auxiliary can never exist on its own without a Post and can never be started without that Post's permission.)
  2. The Department President appoints the official organizer of that Auxiliary, and the organizer must be a member of the Auxiliary.
    - It would help to allow two others who are knowledgeable with Auxiliary business and work well with others to be on an organizing team. They can answer questions and assist with training, educating and mentoring the new Auxiliary once it is instituted. It is recommended that the organizer and the organizing team work with the Auxiliary and its members for at least a year, or until they are ready to proceed as an Auxiliary in good standing.
  3. A minimum of 15 eligible applicants must be on the Charter application. Transfers are accepted at the closure of the institution and just prior to the installation of the newly-formed Auxiliary.
- The Department Chief of Staff could assist by providing the following tools for the organizer and organizing team:
- Talking points for the first meeting.
  - A procedure for membership applications.
  - When and how to collect dues.

- Assist in securing and filling out official and proper paperwork.
- See that deadlines and filings are met in a timely manner.

### **Recognize new VFW Auxiliaries**

Recognize new VFW Auxiliaries at District and Department functions to help them feel welcome and important.

### **Maintaining Current Auxiliaries**

The National Organization has developed many resources for members to use, including tools available in MALTA Member Resources. These resources have proven to be valuable tools in helping Auxiliaries be more productive.

1. The Healthy Auxiliary Tool Kit includes seven (7) resources to assist Auxiliaries in identifying and solving issues including the Healthy Auxiliary Checklist, Auxiliary Meeting Clinic and more.

2. *Building on the VFW Auxiliary Foundation* makes every effort to educate members on all aspects of the duties of Officers at all levels, how to be a Chairman, the why of reporting and more.

3. Saving an Auxiliary may be achieved by recruiting new members. Work with your Membership Chairman to help an Auxiliary become Healthy. (No new members = a true Red Flag)

Remember to use our additional Member Resources:

- "Understanding Auxiliary Traditions" video
- PowerPoint and PDF entitled "Why Having an Auxiliary Can Boost your Post"
- Top 10 Reasons for your Post to Have an Auxiliary Handout
- Good Job Certificates

### **Mentoring and Encouraging Members**

- Mentoring helps broaden leadership skills and leadership provides guidance for mentoring members; they work hand in hand.
- A stronger membership on every level of our organization will be accomplished through mentoring.
- Through the mentoring process, extending the hand of friendship to a new member or even a tenured member who has been inactive for a while can create a strong and vibrant organization. Providing a positive and organized meeting experience will leave members wanting to come back, especially when effective communication and respect for each other is demonstrated.
- Over time, a member may express interest in holding an office or chairmanship. Work with them to help them succeed. This will only make the Auxiliary and the organization better. Choose the mentor carefully.
- The real goal here is to train your replacement and give them the tools they need to succeed.

## EXTENSION & REVITALIZATION AWARDS

### **Awards for Members:**

1. Citation and a \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one member in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best assistance to the Chief of Staff in establishing a new VFW Auxiliary with the approval of the Department President.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

The Department Chief of Staff must sign and send a copy of the completed Department nomination form to the National Chief of Staff by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

### **Awards for District Presidents:**

1. Citation and a \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one District President or Official Representative in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best assistance to the Chief of Staff with a struggling VFW Auxiliary by mentoring and maintaining a close relationship until the VFW Auxiliary becomes healthy, with the approval of the Department President. Use of MALTA Healthy Auxiliary tools and mentor training is required.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

The Department Chief of Staff must sign and send a copy of the completed Department nomination form to the National Chief of Staff by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

### **Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:**

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Chief of Staff in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most unique promotion educating members to maintain healthy VFW Auxiliaries and to promote Extension while utilizing MALTA Member Resources.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 27.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

# HISTORIAN & MEDIA RELATIONS AMBASSADOR



## KRISTIN DIGIACOMO

418 Edmond Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15224-2012  
412-867-0021  
vfwauxpahistorian@gmail.com

### *Embrace the Waves of Change*

While tradition and history are revered in our organization, it's equally important that we find a way to look forward and ahead. While those tried-and-true methods of the traditional media outlets are still reliable and important to utilize, we must also realize that social media outlets are the way of the future.

We must remember that the future can learn from the past just as much as the past can learn from the future!

If we aren't sharing the stories of our Auxiliaries by using as many means of media as possible, including both traditional and social/digital, then those are missed opportunities for us all! We must continue to do our part to grow the Auxiliary as a whole.

### Media

Social media platforms are the BEST (and fastest) way to get the word out about our Programs, our Auxiliaries and what we do for both our veterans and their families. Many of our seasoned members utilize Facebook while many of our younger members prefer Instagram. So, what is stopping your Auxiliary from utilizing these two social media platforms? Did you know that those two platforms can "talk" to one another, and you can cross-post to both platforms by linking your two profiles together?

Communication through traditional media outlets is also important. This includes our newspapers, TV, radio and newsletters.

It's so important to keep our current members up to date on what's happening with our Auxiliaries! Newsletters (both digital emails and printed) are a fantastic way to spread the information about what's happening at your Post and around your communities. Keep in mind that not everyone has an email address, and that is OK. So, what can you do to spread the word and connect with your membership?

- **PREPARE** a monthly or quarterly newsletter to be both mailed and emailed out for your members. Also include some copies at your Post home as well!
- **RECOGNIZE** those members who are celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, volunteer work, etc. Include dates of upcoming events!
- **UPDATE** your Auxiliary/Post Facebook page(s) regularly

### Reels

This year, I would love to focus on Auxiliaries using and creating Reels to spread the word about our Programs and what you're doing in your communities! I bet you're thinking to yourself, "What the heck is a Reel?"

- Reels are full-screen vertical videos up to 90 seconds long. They feature a suite of editing tools and audio tracks, as well as trending voice/sound snippets. Reels allow you to add captions, stickers, and backgrounds; upload multiple video clips; use a range of filters and loads more!
- Reels can be made up of a single video, several clips edited together, still photos or some combination of photos and video. Reels can be posted to both Instagram (which has more than 1.3 billion users!) and Facebook. Reels have outstanding visibility and usually appear at the top of your feed.

- Descriptions and hashtags should be used for the Reels as well and those are easy to add.
- Visit MALTA Member Resources, Historian & Media Relations, to read about how to create a reel.

### **Department Historians & Media Relations Chairmen**

Documentation of the National President's Official Visit to the Departments is a very important responsibility for the Department Historian. Each Department Historian should submit to me a slide show presentation (this can be done in PowerPoint, Keynote or Google Slides) including the following:

- A minimum of five (5) photos of the National President during her visit to your Department.
- A maximum of 10 slides may be used and should tell a story of events, fundraisers, meetings and ceremonies that take place throughout the year.
- All photos should be clear and not blurry.
- All slide show presentations should be emailed to the National Ambassador, shared via Google Drive or OneDrive, or submitted via snail mail on a flash drive to the National Ambassador. Must be received by the National Ambassador by April 30, 2026.





# HISTORIAN & MEDIA RELATIONS PROGRAM

## Historian Duties • Media Relations

The member responsible for Historian & Media Relations duties is a memory keeper, and collector of the five Ws: the who-what-where-when-and-why of your Auxiliary. These individuals compile and chronicle memories and events in written and digital formats, including photographs, memorabilia, print news, audio and/or video clips and social media posts. The Historian & Media Relations member captures the narrative of the Program Year. At the Auxiliary, District and Department levels, these members are the people who get the word out about the Auxiliary to our communities.

The Historian & Media Chairman is also the member who gets the word out about the VFW Auxiliary to our communities. They inform the public about activities, events and our valuable National Programs.

### Auxiliary and District Historian & Media Relations

This member keeps a written report of the history of their Auxiliary or District and submits this to their respective President at the end of the year. Supplemental material can include photographs and newspaper clippings that document special Auxiliary events.

### Department Historian & Media Relations

This member keeps a comprehensive record of the Department President's activities, and should include travels, Official Visits and other official functions. Collect material in written form to capture your Department's history in chronological order. As with the Auxiliary Historian & Media Relations Chairman, this position also compiles photographs and newspaper and/or video clips of Auxiliary news.

The Department Historian & Media Relations member also documents and photographs the National President's visit and may reach out to local media outlets to organize interviews and news opportunities for the National President.

### National Historian & Media Relations

This member documents the travels and activities of the National President. Department-level reports and photos are essential for this job.

### What's newsworthy?

Consider these questions: Does it involve local people? Does it interest non-members? Is it timely? Does it help the community? Is it unique and new? If the answer is yes, this is a chance for you to pitch a story with an "angle" that will showcase your Auxiliary's hard work and accomplishments. Let's show our communities, and our nation, everything we do to improve the lives of veterans, service members and their families.

### Who Should you Contact About Auxiliary News?

Learn the names of reporters who cover stories most similar to yours and tailor your own list of media contacts. Send information directly to these contacts rather than the editor. News staff who specialize in relevant areas, like society and calendar page editors, are more likely to be receptive to including Auxiliary events. Feel free to send a reporter or editor a personal email and be sure to include your contact information.

### Historian & Media Relations Resources

MALTA Member Resources is a great place to find valuable information including:

- The VFW Auxiliary Publicity Guide
- Local and National talking points
- Adult and youth photo release forms
- Sample speeches
- Website and social media/Facebook information
- Sample press releases
- PowerPoint and letter templates
- Photography tips

## HISTORIAN & MEDIA RELATIONS PROGRAM AWARDS

### **Awards for Auxiliaries:**

1. Most outstanding social media reel highlighting the VFW Auxiliary in action.
  - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions with the most outstanding social media reel highlighting their VFW Auxiliary in action.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form and the social media reel to the Department Historian & Media Relations Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging. Instructions on how to make a social media reel is in MALTA Member Resources under Historian & Media Relations, Websites & Social Media – Websites, How To Create a Facebook Reel.

The Department Historian & Media Relations Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form and the social media reel to the National Historian & Media Relations Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

### **Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:**

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Historian & Media Relations Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best training and/or education promoting how to use social media reels.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on Page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of Page 32.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

# HOSPITAL AMBASSADOR



## KIM COPSON

1240 Bodwell Road  
Manchester, NH 03109-5802  
603-475-4427  
lavfw1617kim@yahoo.com

*Caring for our veterans like the ocean  
caring for the waves*

The Hospital Program is one of the oldest Programs in the VFW Auxiliary. There is so much we can do to show our support for our veterans through the Hospital Program. From fundraising to volunteering our time, we can help in many ways. The ultimate goal is to put a smile on their faces.

As a daughter of an Army veteran who served in the Vietnam War, granddaughter to an Army veteran who served in World War II, wife of an Army veteran, who served stateside and daughter-in-law of a Navy veteran who served in the Vietnam War, I have seen how important it is to have the availability and resources needed through the VA and/or hospitals for our veterans.

As we continue to support our veterans, we want to keep bringing the bright smiles of sunshine to our veterans' faces, as they are the stars of this great nation.

No matter their branch of service, they will see the light from the beacon of a lighthouse from afar or at home showing we are there for them.

The Hospital Program was set up to bring smiles to the faces of our veterans in hospitals. It has grown to include VA facilities and nursing homes. But what about the families? Think about our members who are in nursing homes. Visit them, bring them news of the Auxiliary, print the magazine for them, perhaps even read it to them if they are having vision issues.

Many Auxiliary members in nursing homes can still knit or crochet. I'm sure they'd love to still be active in our organization even though they can no longer travel to meetings or events. Maybe volunteer to do a monthly knitting circle, host a movie night or other projects/events at a nursing home. Veterans, Auxiliary members and others in the home can participate. Remember to think outside the box when volunteering at a VA, nursing home or hospital.

Some other ideas include:

- Making cards for our veterans, i.e. for Veterans Day, Christmas, Valentine's Day, even cards that just say hello. This may be a project that possibly can be done in conjunction with a youth group.
- Volunteer at a VA or Veterans Home, maybe help with an event or just visit with a veteran as sometimes they just want to talk to someone. The facility may have a rule that a patient or resident cannot be outside by themselves; someone must sit with them and the staff doesn't have time. You could be that someone. Check to see if there is a local hospital that has a program of any sort that helps with veterans. Some of this may help as a veteran may not be able to get out. Always remember to follow the rules of the facility that you are volunteering at.
- What about a sock hop? Buy little scarves or something to indicate the era. Play music of the times. Work with the facility on possible snacks.
- Coordinate with a local grammar school and the facility to do a trick-or-treat event. The Auxiliary can purchase the candy for the residents to give to the children. Your members and the veterans will love it.

No matter what we do we want to help bring a smile of sunshine to them.

Remember you can recruit members, non-members, youth and families. Make it exciting when asking them as they may be a little reluctant at first to want to volunteer. So, let's get out in our communities and volunteer and get to know our veterans.

I am looking forward to seeing what each state Auxiliaries are doing for our veterans in this Program. Get creative. And remember to let your Department know what you do.





## HOSPITAL PROGRAM

### **Volunteer Recruitment, Recognition and Support**

#### **Valentines for Veterans • Women Veterans Health Care • Honors Escort**

VFW Auxiliary members have been volunteering in hospitals and medical facilities since the organization's inception in 1914. The Hospital Program was one of the first nationally adopted Programs for the organization. This Program plays an important role to provide care and compassion to veterans while helping them feel included and appreciated.

#### **Who Can Volunteer?**

Members, non-members, youth and families can volunteer in many different types of facilities under this Program. They include local hospitals, veterans' homes, nursing homes, both VA and non-VA medical facilities and clinics.

#### **Who Can Serve?**

Members, non-members, youth and families.

#### **What Can We Do?**

Volunteer opportunities are based on the facility where you are volunteering. Some facilities will have a volunteer program in place with specific jobs, events and needs. Many facilities will have a variety of opportunities to suit different ages and abilities. Be sure you follow all the guidelines given by that facility and regularly ask how you can assist them.

#### **Volunteer Recruitment, Recognition and Support**

New volunteers are needed every day across the country. Volunteers offset millions of dollars in expenses in health care. They help create a friendly and caring atmosphere no matter where they volunteer. Here are tips for recruiting and keeping volunteers:

- Provide a monthly sign-up sheet for regular events.
- Email and phone call volunteers for special events.
- Offer public recognition of current volunteers.
- Be specific about what volunteers will be doing, including the time commitment.
- Find out how each person communicates best, whether by phone, email, Facebook or texting.
- If someone says "no" to the first invitation, be sure to ask again!

#### **Volunteer Recognition**

For volunteer hours, VFW Auxiliary Hospital Volunteer Service Pins and Bars, sponsored hospital Volunteer Pins and Hospital Recruiter Charms are available from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters. A Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Representative or VFW Auxiliary Hospital Chairman must complete the official application form in MALTA Member Resources. For this year's current initiatives and awards, please see the Hospital Programs Awards page.

Additional ideas for volunteering including **Honors Escort, Valentines for Veterans** and **Women Veterans Health Care** can be found in MALTA Member Resources.

#### **VA Voluntary Service:**

<https://www.volunteer.va.gov/>

#### **Find your local VA Voluntary Service office at:**

<https://www.volunteer.va.gov/directory/index.asp>

# HOSPITAL AND VAVS PROGRAMS

The VFW Auxiliary provides volunteers and resources to VA facilities across the country and saves the Department of Veterans Affairs millions of dollars a year.

The table below illustrates how the VFW Auxiliary Hospital Program supports the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program.

## **HOSPITAL PROGRAM**

VFW Auxiliary establishes relationships with:

- Hospitals
- Nursing homes
- Veterans homes
- VA facilities
- Other medical facilities where veterans are served

### **PROVIDES NEEDS**

How VFW Auxiliary members participate:

- Participate in projects voted on and accepted by the Auxiliary.
- Make items such as lap robes, hats, quilts, cards, etc.
- Fundraise for the Department's Hospital fund.
- Encourage volunteers in ALL medical facilities.
- Promote projects and volunteer opportunities to all members and the community.
- Present Hospital Volunteer Appreciation certificates.
- Order VFW Auxiliary Hospital Pins for total hours earned from all facilities.
- Hours are earned in ALL VA and non-VA facilities.

**HOURS earn VFW Auxiliary Awards!**

## **VAVS PROGRAM**

The Department of Veterans Affairs created the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program for organizations to serve in VA medical facilities:

- Members participate in this VA partnership with Veterans Service Organizations.
- In addition to Auxiliary recognition, the VA National Advisory Council awards a Volunteer of the Year award. For more information, contact either the Voluntary Services personnel or the VAVS National Representative or Deputy Representatives.

### **COMMUNICATES NEEDS**

How VFW Auxiliary members participate:

- Be a Regularly Scheduled (RS) or Occasional volunteer.
- Regularly Scheduled (RS) volunteers:
  - Comply with VAVS Guidelines.
  - Participate on a regularly scheduled basis.
  - Are supervised by a VA employee.
  - Are appointed by the Department President as VAVS Representative or Deputy Representative.
- Occasional volunteers:
  - Do not meet the requirements of RS volunteers.
  - Volunteer with a group or organization occasionally.

**HOURS earn VAVS AND VFW Auxiliary Awards!**

**TOTAL HOURS FROM BOTH PROGRAMS  
EQUAL OUR REPORTED HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER HOURS.**

For more information on the VFW Auxiliary's participation in Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program, please see the VAVS Participation Guide or contact the Department Hospital Chairman.

The VAVS Participation Guide is available behind MALTA login in MALTA Member Resources.

# HOSPITAL PROGRAM AWARDS

## Awards for Members:

1. Citation to one VFW Auxiliary member in each of the 10 Program Divisions who recruits the most Hospital (VA and non-VA facilities) volunteers from July 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026. Entry form required available on MALTA Member Resources. Citations to be mailed directly to winners from National Headquarters after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.
2. "Hospital Volunteer Recruiter of the Year" plaque awarded to one VFW Auxiliary member in the nation who recruits the most Hospital (VA and non-VA facilities) volunteers from July 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026. Entry form required available on MALTA Member Resources. Plaque to be mailed directly to winner from National Headquarters after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.
3. Citation to the Outstanding Hospital Volunteer of the Year in each of the 10 Program Divisions. Entry form required available on MALTA Member Resources. Citations to be mailed directly to winners from National Headquarters after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

## Awards for Auxiliaries:

1. Most creative/unique activity and/or event to interact with and provide happiness to veterans in hospitals (VA and non-VA facilities)
  - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most creative/unique activity and/or event to interact with and provide happiness to veterans in hospitals (VA and non-VA facilities).

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Hospital Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department Hospital Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department winning entry form to the National Hospital Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the winning VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

## Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Hospital Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most outstanding promotion of creative/unique activity and/or event to interact with and to provide happiness to veterans in hospitals (VA and non-VA facilities).

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 36.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

# LEGISLATIVE AMBASSADOR



**AMY JO LETT**

10792 Mount Tabor Road  
Odessa, MO 64076-6104  
816-668-3164  
[gratefuladvocacy@gmail.com](mailto:gratefuladvocacy@gmail.com)

*Lighting the way between veterans' families and legislators with a wave of gratitude.*

*Thank You for Your Service –  
Turning our Gratitude into Action*

Every time we say, “**Thank you for your service,**” we are acknowledging the sacrifices made by veterans and their families. But we can go beyond words and translate gratitude into action. Our Legislative Program empowers us to advocate for policies that improve the lives of veterans, service members and their families by turning our appreciation into meaningful legislative advocacy.

Consider lighting the way between veterans' families and local legislators by facilitating roundtable discussions, veterans' families could share their experiences and legislators could learn firsthand about the impact of legislation on veterans and their families' lives. These discussions are not only about advocacy but also about ensuring our legislators understand that behind every policy is a story of service and sacrifice.

## **Follow up with Gratitude**

After in-person meetings with local legislators, follow up with an email or thank-you card. The thank you could include a QR code linking to a video of veterans from your community affected by those policies. This will reinforce the impact of the discussion and keep the advocacy message alive.

## **Legislative “Gratitude Days”**

Establish specific days of action where Auxiliaries commit to contacting legislators with a message of thanks, while also urging them to support legislation that benefits veterans.

- Think about key dates, such as Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Vietnam War Veterans Day, Armed Forces Day, or the birthdays of the U.S. Military Branches.
- Include social media campaigns and community engagement.
- Include the youth in your activities.

## **Thank-You Notes with a Purpose**

Host a note-writing campaign where handwritten thank-you notes to veterans are paired with QR codes or links that direct recipients to the VFW Action Corps Weekly sign-up page or the VFW Priority Goals. This can add a layer of engagement, turning gratitude into action. Veterans in the community will feel appreciated, and they will be empowered and engaged with ongoing legislative efforts. Connecting this activity to a community veterans recognition event is one of many ways to reach our veterans.

## **Veteran Advocacy Training**

Prepare Auxiliary members to become powerful voices in legislative advocacy. Organize training workshops for members, teaching them advocacy skills and strategies for engaging lawmakers.

- Use MALTA Member Resources, Legislative.
- Utilize online tools and resources from your local and state government.

- Educate members about how we are non-partisans; we support legislation that improves the lives of veterans and service members.
- When joining the VFW on Capitol Hill during the Legislative Conference in D.C., always allow the VFW to take the lead when speaking to our legislators.
- Open the Action Corps Weekly, lack of activity will result in removal from the mailing list.
- Push the button on Action Alerts from the VFW.
- Use the VFW Auxiliary Legislative hashtag #AuxLegislative.





## Be An Advocate • Be Informed • Be Engaged

One of the main objectives of the Legislative Program is to improve the lives of our veterans, service members and their families through advocacy. Your efforts, combined with nearly 1.5 million other VFW and Auxiliary members, can influence lawmakers whose decisions affect veterans and their families every day.

Study the issues laid out clearly in the VFW Priority Goals. The VFW focuses on these to strengthen and ensure an adequate VA system for millions of current and future veterans.

The goals are grouped under six areas of concern:

- Budget
- Health Care
- Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
- Education, Employment and Transition Assistance
- Military Readiness
- National Security, Foreign Affairs and POW/MIA

These goals are released in January of each year by the VFW on the VFW National website:  
<https://www.vfw.org/advocacy/national-legislative-service>

### VFW Action Corps Weekly

These goals are released in January of each year by the VFW on the VFW National website at:  
<https://votervoice.net/VFW/register>

To identify your congressional representatives, visit the VFW website at:  
<https://votervoice.net/VFW/Address>

### Step by Step—A Bill

To follow the progress of a specific bill through the stages of the legislative process by its number or by a key word or phrase go to:  
<https://www.congress.gov/>

### VFW in D.C.

By testifying at committee hearings and interacting

with congressional members, the VFW played an instrumental role in nearly every piece of veterans' legislation passed in the 20th Century, as well as bills developed in the 21st Century.

One of the most crucial responsibilities of the VFW Washington, D.C. office is to actively lobby Congress and the administration on behalf of veterans. The office monitors all legislation affecting veterans and alerts VFW and Auxiliary members about key legislation under consideration.

The VFW and VFW Auxiliary advocates for veterans by testifying at hearings, interacting with Congress and fighting for justice. The VFW has played a key role in many major pieces of veterans' legislation.

To contact the D.C. office:

Website: [vfw.org/advocacy](https://www.vfw.org/advocacy)

Phone: 202-543-2239

Mail: 200 Maryland Ave., N.E.

Washington, D.C. 20002

### VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship

To continue empowering tomorrow's leaders, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and Student Veterans of America (SVA) hosts the VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship, providing exemplary student veterans the opportunity to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill and in their community. This program has been held annually since 2014.

During the VFW event, they will engage with Congress members, educating them on the challenges faced by today's veterans. Fellows can also join VFW advocates from their respective states and form teams to directly meet with the leadership from the committees responsible for veterans' issues, including the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees.

For rules and eligibility, visit the VFW website at:

<https://www.vfw.org/assistance/student-veterans-support/student-fellowship>

## LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM AWARDS

### **Awards for Auxiliaries:**

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event to create thank-you notes and cards to veterans that include links to VFW Action Corps Weekly and/or the VFW Priority Goals.
  - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event to create thank-you notes and cards to veterans that include links to VFW Action Corps Weekly and/or the VFW Priority Goals.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Legislative Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department Legislative Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Legislative Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

### **Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:**

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Legislative Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions with the largest increase in the use of the VFW Action Alerts and new VFW Action Corps Weekly sign-ups from July 1, 2025 through April 30, 2026.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 41.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

# MEMBERSHIP AMBASSADOR



MIKE MARUSZAK

7423 Terrace Drive  
Justice, IL 60458-1186  
708-935-6610  
michael-j-maruszak@  
outlook.com

*I am the Ocean.*

**I am the ocean** because our National President Lois Callahan's theme is ***From Sea to Shining Sea, Honoring Veterans Who Keep Us Free.*** The ocean can be calm or filled with storms. Our Auxiliaries are the lighthouses in the ocean that cover a large area. The ocean can be calm as well as rough. When our membership is prospering things are calm. When membership is down, we face rough times. Tides and waves come in different sizes; Auxiliaries come in all different membership sizes.

Having a strong membership base is what draws someone to become a member of that organization. Our membership is the core of our organization. As members, we have the responsibility to help the families of our veterans and foster true patriotism. To make sure that our elected government officials both locally and nationally stand up for our veterans and their families.

## Recruiting New Members

How are we going to carry out what our organization was chartered to do? By recruiting new members and assuring our current members stay a vital part of our Auxiliary. If you look at the VFW membership number versus the Auxiliary, we can do better. We joined to give **Honor to our Veteran(s).**

We have an easy tool to figure out who is eligible by using the Membership Eligibility Wheel. It's quick because the wheel shows family members

who qualify to join. Your prospective members may have question about the Auxiliary. We have a quick solution. Almost everyone has a smartphone or tablet with them or within reach. Our newest Membership tool is our QR code (located at the end of my Program page). All your prospective members will need to do is scan the QR code, which will direct them to the VFW Auxiliary website. They will be welcomed with a history of our Auxiliary. As they scroll, they will come upon a downloadable Fact Sheet, Membership Application and Membership brochure. They will then be able to enter their location to find an Auxiliary nearest to them.

In MALTA, find a fillable and downloadable business card template that Membership Chairmen, or anyone who wants to assist with recruiting, can fill out, download and print. The recruiter could give the business card to the potential member. Always remember to gather the name and contact information of the potential member for follow up within two weeks. Remember to sign the application, so you get credit for recruiting the member. The application goes to the Investigation Committee to confirm the candidate's eligibility. Auxiliaries have several members trained in the applications review process. Remember that a VFW member can also recruit an Auxiliary member. They are also given credit for recruiting that member.

I'd like every Department, District and Auxiliary Officer to ask their VFW counterpart if their spouse and family members are members. If they are not members get them to join. Here are some ways to recruit new members.

- Joint VFW/Auxiliary open house
- Exclusive Membership drives
- State/County fairs (with prior approval)
- Patriotic gathering (with prior approval)
- Newspaper article
- Partner with your Program Chairmen from Extensions & Revitalization, Youth Activities, Scholarships, etc.

## Retaining Members

We also have a responsibility to retain our current membership. Each member we have has something to contribute to our existence. Sometimes our members may experience a time in their lives where they face a financial concern. When this occurs, our seasoned members may delay paying their dues or even forget. We get it, but we do not want to lose these valuable members. We can assist these members in several ways. Consider adopting this member and paying their dues. Consider having a fundraiser or raffle in your Department, District or Auxiliary which will be used to pay dues or purchase a Life Membership for a member or members. The ultimate way of keeping a seasoned member is member-to-member(s) gifting. Remember, if you choose to pay for a member or members, this must be voted on by the Auxiliary or included in the standing rules, i.e., the standing rules state that Auxiliary 1234 will pay dues for every member age 85 and older. These are just a few ways to retain membership. Within your Departments, Districts and Auxiliaries, you know what works.

## Resources

Utilize the Membership tools you can find on MALTA, they will assist you with recruiting and retaining members. Always remember we Joined to **Honor Our Veteran(s)**. When recruiting a new member share a tidbit on your veteran who allowed you to join. My eligibility was a two-step process. The first was my amazing father, PFC Anthony Maruszak, who served in the 8th Army Engineer Corps in the Korean War. My second opportunity came when the Auxiliary allowed males to become members. When recruiting, say your veterans' name as a way of letting the prospective member know you let them live on through you as a proud member of the VFW Auxiliary. Who is your veteran you honor?



## CONFERENCE COACHES



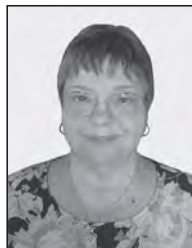
### BIG TEN STATES

Nancy Ustruck  
3812 S. 57th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53220-2051  
414-327-2754  
mothernanc@wi.rr.com



### SOUTHERN STATES

Carol Feters  
13218 Three Rivers Road  
Gulfport, MS 39503-4905  
228-596-5014  
cafeters48@gmail.com



### EASTERN STATES

Margaret Russo  
15 Grant Street  
Sewaren, NJ 07077-1207  
732-887-7947  
vfwadeptnjsec@aol.com



### WESTERN STATES

Betty Decker  
4705 Baltic Avenue  
Farmington, NM 87402-1716  
505-801-1183  
bldeck@live.com

**Conference Coaches** have the responsibility to ensure our membership prospers. These Coaches know membership and will work with each of their states Membership Chairmen. They will get to know each of them on a personnel level so they can achieve our membership goal.

Conference Coaches will work within their Conference to provide the necessary support needed to strengthen our membership with new members. Revitalize our current members with mentoring opportunities. We will work to increase our membership. They will attend their respective Conference meetings to promote Membership. Your Membership Ambassador might even attend these meetings.

Continue your veteran(s) legacy by retaining your membership and recruiting new members so your veteran(s) will continue to live on through you as member of the VFW Auxiliary.



## MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

### **Invite New Members • Include Current Members • Invest in the Future of the Organization**

The VFW Auxiliary started with a small group of women who wanted to serve veterans; it has grown exponentially and now includes both males and females as members. There is only one way to add members: ask someone to join. And once they join, ask them to participate.

#### **Invite Someone to Join**

There are numerous places and times to ask someone if they want to join the VFW Auxiliary. Your approach will look different depending on who your audience is.

In all cases, the potential member should have some knowledge of what the VFW Auxiliary is and what we do before they ever receive an application.

Remember to reach out to your VFW Post members periodically to see if they have family members who may want to join.

#### **What We Do**

Our programs are designed to bring needed services, information and assistance to improve the lives of veterans, service members, their families and our communities.

**When someone joins the VFW Auxiliary, they will have the opportunity to:**

- Support veterans, service members and their families.
- Develop new skills.
- Network and develop friendships.
- Enjoy member benefits.

#### **Follow Up!**

The first time you talk to someone new about the organization, that person may not be ready to commit. It's important to ask for their contact information and then follow up within a week.

#### **Include Them in Meetings and Events**

The key to keeping members is getting them involved. Call or email a new member within a week with the next meeting date and time, or the next possible event or project. Offer to pick them up or invite them to get coffee before or after a meeting.

Put a team of members in charge of contacting new members or members who haven't been to a meeting recently. The team should be friendly and knowledgeable about the Auxiliary.

#### **Ways to Encourage Participation**

- Provide a monthly sign-up sheet for regular events.
- Send emails and make phone calls for special events.
- Public recognition of current volunteers. (Consider posters at your VFW Post Home, if permitted, that spotlight member involvement.)
- Be specific about what they will be doing, including the time commitment.
- Find out how that person communicates best, whether by phone, email, Facebook or texting.
- Have another member stay with them for the entire length of the activity or event.
- If they say "no" to the first invitation, be sure to ask again!
- Plan family-friendly events! Members with children in the home want opportunities to do things with their family.

## Invest in the Future

- New members can bring new life to your Auxiliary.
- New members provide additional volunteers.

## Have a Plan

Every Department and Auxiliary should have a Membership Plan. This plan should include:

- Contacting current members.
- Reaching out to former members.
- Recruiting events for new members.
- Picking a mentor for a new member.
- Before a membership year begins, set your calendar for these events:
  - o Make it as easy as possible for members to renew their dues. They can renew online in MALTA!
  - o Plan recruiting events in your community each year. This can be done by the Auxiliary or in conjunction with your VFW Post.

## Important Tools:

- Fact Sheet, available for free from National Headquarters.
- Business card with contact information/ Auxiliary keychains with Membership QR code. (Order yours from the VFW Store, [vfwstore.org](http://vfwstore.org).)
- MALTA Member Resources.
- Auxiliary Membership Information QR code:



# MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM AWARDS

MEMBERSHIP AWARDS FOR AUXILIARIES, DEPARTMENTS AND CONFERENCES WILL BE BASED ON THE PAID TOTAL LISTED ON THE CMR-PAID, CANCELED & DECEASED REPORT IN MALTA.

## Awards for Members

1. **5 Member Recruiter Pin.** Each VFW and VFW Auxiliary member who recruits five (5) new and/or rejoined members to the VFW Auxiliary will receive a **5 Member Recruiter Pin.** Pin mailed directly to the recruiter.
2. **5 Member Recruiter Drawing.** Each VFW and VFW Auxiliary member who recruits five (5) new and/or rejoined members to the VFW Auxiliary will be entered into the **5 Member Recruiter Drawing** to receive a \$100 Visa Gift Card.
3. **"National Membership Achievement" Recruiter Award.** Each VFW and VFW Auxiliary member who recruits twenty (20) new and/or rejoined members to the VFW Auxiliary will receive a **"National Membership Achievement" Recruiter Award.** VFW Auxiliary Treasurers on all levels are not eligible for this award.
4. **"National Membership Achievement" Recruiter Drawing.** Each VFW and VFW Auxiliary member who recruits twenty (20) new and/or rejoined members to the VFW Auxiliary will be entered in the **"National Membership Achievement" Recruiter Drawing** to receive a \$400 Visa Gift Card. VFW Auxiliary Treasurers on all levels are not eligible for this award.

New and/or rejoined members must be recruited to the VFW Auxiliary from July 1, 2025 through May 31, 2026. The Department Treasurer must enter membership in MALTA with credit given to the recruiter by June 10, 2026.

VFW recruiters, must complete the VFW Members Only recruiter form to be received at National Headquarters by June 10, 2026.

Membership Award winners **No. 2, No. 3 and No. 4** will be announced and the awards will be presented at the 2026 National Convention in Reno, Nevada. If the award winner is not in attendance, the award will be mailed directly to winner from National Headquarters after National Convention.

## Awards for Auxiliaries

1. \$50 to each Auxiliary that reaches 100% Plus in Membership by June 30, 2026\*.

## Awards for Department Chairmen

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Membership Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for most outstanding activity and/or event training and promoting the Membership Program.
2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on Page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of Page 45.

## MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM AWARDS

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

### Awards for Departments

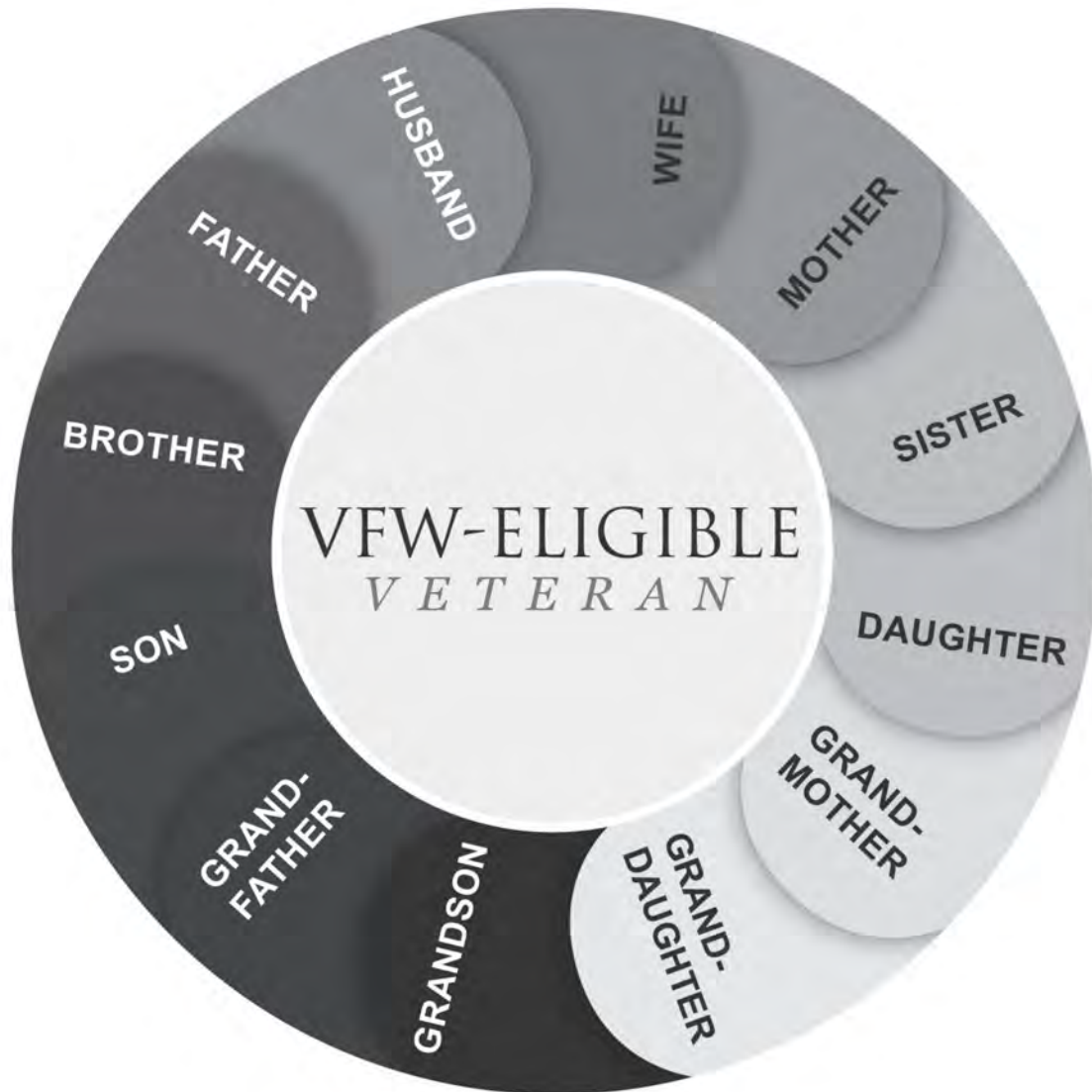
1. Bronze Department Award #1: \$200 to each Department that reaches 95% Plus in paid membership by November 30, 2025\*.
2. Silver Department Award #2: \$250 to each Department that reaches 98% Plus in paid membership by February 28, 2026\*.
3. Gold Department Award #3: \$300 to each Department that reaches 100% Plus in paid membership by April 30, 2026\*.
4. Platinum Department Award #4: \$400 to each Department that reaches 102% Plus in paid membership by May 31, 2026\*.

Departments that receive the Platinum Department Award #4: \$400 ACH will still receive Gold Department Award #3: \$300 for a combined total of \$700.

### Awards for Conferences and Conference Coaches

1. \$50 to each Department within the Conference with the highest total percentage by January 31, 2026\*.
2. \$50 to each Department within the Conference with the highest total percentage by June 30, 2026\*.
3. Keepsake to each of the four (4) Conference Coaches for their hard work and dedication in this Program.

## VFW AUXILIARY ELIGIBILITY WHEEL



*\*Step- and adopted parents, children, siblings (and half-siblings), grandparents and grandchildren are considered the same as biological parents, children, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren and may join the VFW Auxiliary under their VFW-eligible veteran.*

# VFW AUXILIARY MEMBERSHIP / MEMBER TRANSFER APPLICATION

An incomplete application could delay your membership start date.

Applicant completes sections A, B, C or D and F. Auxiliaries/Departments complete section E.

**A** Recruited/Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_ Recruiter Member ID \_\_\_\_\_  
Auxiliary No. \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Member ID (If already a member) \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Annual Membership ☐ Rejoin  
☐ Life Membership ☐ Transfer  
☐ Member at Large in Department of \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Member at Large - VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters  
(If not a transfer, skip to B.)  
☐ **LIFE MEMBER TRANSFER** Previous Auxiliary \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ **ANNUAL TRANSFER** ☐ Previous Auxiliary \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Paying ☐ Nonpaying  
☐ **ANNUAL TRANSFER CONVERTING TO LIFE** (Fill out Life Membership information below.) Previous Auxiliary \_\_\_\_\_

**B** THESE FIELDS REQUIRED  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Female ☐ Male ☐  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**C** ☐ **POST-AFFILIATED** (\*Must be a current member of the VFW Post affiliated with the Auxiliary to which you are applying.)  
Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ to Eligible Veteran\* \_\_\_\_\_ VFW Membership ID \_\_\_\_\_

**D** THESE FIELDS REQUIRED  
☐ **NON-AFFILIATED** (\*Veteran is not a current member of the VFW Post affiliated with the Auxiliary to which you are applying.)  
Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ to Eligible Veteran\* \_\_\_\_\_ VFW Post (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of campaign ribbons or medals: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dates of Service: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

**E** Investigating Committee Signatures  
1 ☒ \_\_\_\_\_ 2 ☒ \_\_\_\_\_ 3 ☒ \_\_\_\_\_  
Per Section 102 of the National Bylaws. ☐ Rejected ☐ Accepted Meeting Date \_\_\_\_\_ Obligated Date \_\_\_\_\_

**F** **OBLIGATION** In the presence of Almighty God and the members of this organization here assembled, I do of my own free will and accord, solemnly promise that I will never wrong or defraud this organization nor a member thereof nor permit either to be wronged if in my power to prevent it. I will never propose for membership any person not eligible, according to our Bylaws. I further state that I believe in God, I will be faithful to the United States of America, obedient to the laws and loyal to the Flag. Should my membership with this organization cease in any way, I will consider this obligation as binding outside of the organization as though I had remained a member. I do so promise.  
I attest that I am at least 16 years of age. I pledge to comply with the National Bylaws of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Auxiliary.  
I attest I am not eligible for membership in the VFW. I further attest that the above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, including my stated relationship to the Veteran.

Signature ☒ \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Must be signed by all members.)

## LIFE MEMBERSHIP ONLY

☐ Check here if this is a gift.

Credit cards may **NOT** be used for initial payment of Annual Dues.

☐ Cash ☐ Check ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ AMEX \_\_\_\_\_ Life Membership Fee

Name on credit card \_\_\_\_\_

Billing address for card \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card No. \_\_\_\_\_ CVV Code \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature ☒ \_\_\_\_\_

## LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEES

Life Membership fees are not refundable.

Attained age at 12/31 of year applying for Life Membership.

Through 20	\$253
21-25	\$242
26-30	\$230
31-35	\$219
36-40	\$213
41-45	\$201
46-50	\$196
51-55	\$184
56-60	\$173
61-65	\$161
66-70	\$150
71-75	\$132
76-80	\$109
81-85	\$86
86-90	\$69
91 and over	\$58

By signing this, I agree to the stated charges for a Life Membership fee.

Revised February 2024

# SCHOLARSHIPS AMBASSADOR



## PHILIP REINPOLD

834 W. El Portal Drive  
Pueblo, CO 81007-1966  
719-252-5667  
vfwascholars@gmail.com

*Shine your light -- others will be  
drawn by your brilliance*

My interest and excitement for the Scholarships Program comes from my direct involvement in and from seeing firsthand the incredible talent and creativity possessed by our youth and our members, their spouses and children.

A 2023 trip to Washington, D.C. as Department President allowed me to be there for the presentation of the awards for VFW scholarships – a full circle experience that showed me how vital it is to recognize and reward talented youth and how it enriches the lives of those who participate. This is why I am excited to serve as a National Ambassador and promote our Auxiliary Scholarships. Our communities benefit directly on many levels from the Scholarships Program, and we need to show just how valuable this Program really is. The excitement and creativity that you show all year long in this Program is the key to making it work!

### Continuing Education Scholarship

We have had fewer applicants than we hoped for with this scholarship contest. It is a well-kept secret that shouldn't be a secret at all! It is vital that we get the word out to our members who, along with their family members, are the individuals who qualify for this opportunity.

In addition to getting more and more members, their spouses and children to apply for this

scholarship, we also want to grow the Continuing Education Scholarship escrow fund so we can award more money to students per Conference, per year. This is VFW Auxiliary National President Lois Callahan's special project for her year, as Continuing Education is close to her heart. When she returned to college in her late 20s, she benefited from help with tuition, books and supplies that made balancing studies, work and life more manageable.

Find more details on how to contribute to Lois Callahan's special project at the front of this book.

### Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest

The VFW Auxiliary has been recognizing talented young artists for more than 45 years through its Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest. We need to spread the word about this scholarship to the areas where the young artists are like schools, churches, skate parks, restaurants, etc. Use your imagination – better yet, get some ideas from your kids and grandkids! Talk to youth leaders, teachers and counselors for other ideas and suggestions. Be sure to get permission from schools and businesses before posting information about our scholarship contests.

The Scholarships link on the VFW Auxiliary National Website contains everything that you need to learn about our scholarships; how to apply, where to submit the entry, etc. Use the information listed there to ensure that you follow through with all necessary steps and meet deadlines.

### 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest

This contest is the newest for the VFW Auxiliary. The 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest is also available to students Grades 9-12.

All Patriotic Art brochures are available to order from National Headquarters or download from

MALTA for you to use to get the word out to as many people and community partners as possible. NEW this year for 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art is a requirement that students submit a photo of their art prior to mailing to HQ. Why? Because each year, National sadly receives broken art, and in order to judge students' wonderful work, we need to see what the art was truly meant to look like.

I'd like to focus on the importance of packing this precious cargo. Let's get the word out to students, parents, teachers and others about just how crucial it is to carefully pack these fragile pieces, and all art pieces, as they can get damaged in the mail. The last thing we want is to have to break the news that a beautiful piece was damaged, or worse, destroyed, in transit.

### **VFW Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy**

The VFW Auxiliary has long been a supporter of these very worthy scholarships for students in grades 6-12. The VFW Patriot's Pen is a short-written essay for students in Grades 6-8 addressing a theme determined by VFW. The VFW Voice of Democracy is a Grades 9-12 vocal recording of a written essay. Please consult the VFW National website for additional information and aids.





## SCHOLARSHIPS PROGRAM

### **Student Participation • Recipient Recognition • Community Awareness • Increasing the Fund**

Each of our scholarships encourage patriotism, assist students in attaining an education and help students reach their full potential. This increases VFW and Auxiliary recognition while supporting our communities, students and members.

#### **Continuing Education Scholarship**

Open to any Auxiliary member (who has been a member for at least a year), their spouse, son or daughter with a financial need. Entrant must be at least 21 years old, complete the application and submit an essay of 300 words or less. The application must be received at National Headquarters by February 15:

Program Awards Administrator  
VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters  
406 W. 34th Street, 10th Floor  
Kansas City, MO 64111

Or email it to [info@vfwauxiliary.org](mailto:info@vfwauxiliary.org)

\$1,250 will be awarded to one applicant in each of the four conferences. Scholarships are paid directly to the American college, vocational, technical or trade school of the awardee's choice. Applications are in MALTA Member Resources under the Scholarships tab.

To donate to the Continuing Education Fund  
Log in to MALTA. Click on "Make a Gift."  
Select Continuing Education or mail checks to:

VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters  
Attn: Continuing Education Fund  
406 W. 34th Street, 10th Floor  
Kansas City, MO 64111

#### **Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest and 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest**

These two Patriotic Art Contests are open to any student in grades 9-12 who is enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application for which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen. Foreign exchange students, students age 20 or older, GED and adult education students or national winners of the same previous Patriotic Art Contests are ineligible. Entries will be judged on patriotic theme and technique.

Scholarships are paid directly to the American college, vocational, technical or trade school of the winners' choice.

#### **VFW Auxiliary National Scholarships: Young American Creative Patriotic Art**

**First Place** – VFW Auxiliary National  
\$15,000

**Second Place** – VFW Auxiliary National  
\$7,500

**Third Place** – VFW Auxiliary National  
\$3,500

**Fourth Place** – Sandy Germany Department of  
Alabama Scholarship  
\$1,500

**Fifth Place** – Evelyn McCune Department of Kansas Scholarship  
\$1,500

**Sixth Place** – M. Blanche Child Department of Kansas Auxiliary 1650 Scholarship  
\$1,000

**Seventh Place** – Jean Hamil Department of Florida Scholarship  
\$1,000

**Eighth Place** – Department of Florida VFW Auxiliary Scholarship  
\$500

**Ninth Place** – Betty Morris Department of Maryland Scholarship  
\$500

**Tenth Place** – Juanita Crowe-Durbino Department of Tennessee Scholarship  
\$500

**Eleventh Place** – Lorraine Frier Department of North Dakota Scholarship  
\$500

**Twelfth Place** – Department of Wisconsin VFW Auxiliary Scholarship  
\$500

**Thirteenth Place** – Rosemary Mazer Department of New Jersey Scholarship  
\$500

**Fourteen Place** – PDP Carol Betro and PNP Sandi Kriebel Scholarship  
\$500

**Fifteenth Place** – Department of North Carolina VFW Auxiliary Scholarship  
\$500

**Sixteenth Place** – VFW Auxiliary National  
\$500

**Seventeenth Place** – VFW Auxiliary National  
\$500

**Eighteenth Place** – VFW Auxiliary National  
\$500

**Nineteenth Place** – VFW Auxiliary National  
\$500

### **VFW Auxiliary National Scholarships: 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art**

**First place** – Jane Reape Department of New York Scholarship  
\$2,500

**Second place** – VFW Auxiliary National  
\$1,500

**Third place** - VFW Auxiliary National  
\$1,000

**Fourth place** - VFW Auxiliary National  
\$500

### **Deadlines for Young American Creative Patriotic Art and 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art entries:**

Participating VFW Auxiliary – March 31  
(District Judging is OPTIONAL)  
VFW Auxiliary Department – April 15  
VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters – May 5

### **Recognition Is Key**

It is important that scholarship winners receive recognition at every level.

Ways to recognize winners:

- Host an awards ceremony.
- Present a certificate and/or gift.
- Present awards at a school assembly.
- Don't forget to recognize the parents and teachers!

### **VFW Auxiliary Scholarship and Contest Resources**

Official forms and contest rules can be found in MALTA Member Resources and on our VFW Auxiliary National website: <https://vfwauxiliary.org/>

To support the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Scholarship and the 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Scholarship escrow fund:

Log in to MALTA. Click on “Make a Gift.”  
Select Patriotic Art or mail checks to:

VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters  
Attn: Patriotic Art Scholarship Fund  
406 W. 34th Street, 10th Floor  
Kansas City, MO 64111

## **VFW National Scholarships and Contests**

The VFW Auxiliary is proud to be a longtime supporter of the VFW and their scholarships, contest, programs and grants.

- **VFW Voice of Democracy Scholarship**  
Established in 1947, this VFW audio-essay competition provides students in grades 9-12 with the unique opportunity to express themselves regarding a democratic and patriotic-themed recorded essay.
- **VFW Patriot’s Pen Scholarship**  
This VFW essay contest encourages young minds grades 6-8 to examine America’s history, along with their own experiences in modern American society, by drafting a 300- to 400-word essay, expressing their views based on a patriotic theme.
- **VFW’s “Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship”**  
Introduced in 2013, this VFW program awards scholarships to qualifying service members and veterans with the financial assistance they need to complete their educational goals without incurring excessive student loan debt.

## **VFW Resources**

Please see the VFW website for contest themes, official forms, rules and eligibility:  
<https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education>

# SCHOLARSHIPS PROGRAM AWARDS

## **Awards for Auxiliaries:**

1. Most creative and/or unique activity and/or event educating their community about the scholarship opportunities in the VFW and the VFW Auxiliary.
  - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that hosts the most creative and/or unique activity and/or event educating their community about the scholarship opportunities in the VFW and the VFW Auxiliary.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Scholarships Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department Scholarships Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Scholarships Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

## **Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:**

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Scholarships Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of increasing donations to the Continuing Education scholarships fund.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 53.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

# VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT AMBASSADOR



## ANNIE O'CONNOR

103 Alpine Drive  
Vine Grove, KY 40175-1579  
912-655-2726  
auxambassadorannie@gmail.com

*A rising tide lifts all veterans to success!*

As a spouse of a recently retired soldier from the Army and as an Army employee myself, I am passionate about ensuring that every service member, family member and veteran/retiree feels valued, supported and celebrated as much as possible. **You can say that I'm always charting a course to help our veterans!**

Our veterans have sacrificed so much for us, and it's our time to do our part to give back to them. This year, our main focal points will be:

- VFW-Based Veterans Assistance Programs
- Veterans' Mental Health Awareness
- Veteran and Veteran Spouses Employment

### **Veterans and Military Support Programs and National Veterans Service**

The VFW takes care of those "here," who took care of us "there," regardless of where "there" may have been. We have Veteran Service Officers in every Department, dedicated to helping our veterans obtain the benefits they sacrificed so much for. Additionally, there is a plethora of other programs such as VFW Financial Assistance for Service Members and the Military Appreciation Program (MAP), designed to help provide a bridge over the hard times and help our veterans get back on their feet in times of need.

Other tangible means of assistance include supporting units during all phases of deployment. Whether your local National Guard unit is mobilizing and traveling for pre-deployment training, has deployed downrange and needs some homespun holiday cheer or are headed home and need some snacks as they go through their homecoming processing, there are multiple ways to thank them and ensure they receive the support they deserve. The VFW has financial grants that are available to help with events held by our Auxiliaries and Posts to support and recognize our troops. Never forget that the troops serving today, along with their families, will be the next wave of members!

For more information, visit the VFW website at: [vfw.org/assistance](http://vfw.org/assistance)

### **Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness**

Many combat veterans are still at war... with a mind and heart struggling to process what they have seen and had to do. We must remember that the battle isn't over when they unlace their boots. In fact, when those boots come off for good is when the fight truly begins for a large percentage of veterans. The Auxiliary can never stop ensuring that people are aware of the warning signs of ANYONE possibly considering ending their life. Always promote that help is a call or text away at 988 (Press 1)!

### **Employment Assistance for Veterans**

Once a service member separates from the military, they are walking away, not only from a job but a whole very structured lifestyle. They need to adapt to the civilian world and it's not always easy. Quite often, their spouse experiences the same difficulty because they either have had to continuously change jobs due to military

relocation or they just remained out of the job market and now they must reenter it. Regardless of why, the veteran and/or their spouse must adapt to the current market. Consider working with local employers to host a job fair or job skills seminar for your local veterans and their spouses. It's vital they see that we stand ready to assist them!

So, let's celebrate our service members, veterans and families as they've never been celebrated before. Let's show the world that a **rising tide lifts all veterans to success!**





## VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

**VFW National Veterans Service • VFW Veterans & Military Support Programs**

**Assist Veterans, Service Members and their Families**

**Promote Veteran & Military Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness**

### **Spread the Word about National Veterans Service (NVS)**

#### **VA Claims & Separation Benefits**

The VFW's **National Veterans Service (NVS)** was established to help all veterans, service members, their families and survivors. NVS consists of a nationwide network of VFW Accredited Service Officers and Pre-Discharge Representatives who are experts in navigating VA processes and are the key to your success. VFW Accredited Service Officers are with America's veterans every step of the way once they're ready to file a claim. This is a service the VFW is proud to offer — **FREE OF CHARGE** — to anyone seeking assistance with the claims process.

#### **Pre-Discharge**

The VFW Pre-Discharge program was established in 2001 through a cooperative initiative with the Pentagon and the Department of Veterans Affairs. This program ensures separating and retiring active-duty military personnel receive assistance in obtaining their VA entitlements and benefits upon discharge. Pre-Discharge offices are located on or near major military installations across the country.

Additional information, links and forms are located on the VFW website:

<https://www.vfw.org/assistance/va-claims-separation-benefits>

#### **Military Appreciation Program (MAP)**

The VFW Military Appreciation Program (MAP) is the outstretched hand between the local VFW and military community, offering support around the world. Since 2005, MAP has sponsored events supporting service members and their families.

A large part of MAP is the **Adopt-A-Unit** program, providing VFW Posts with the opportunity to adopt hundreds of military units around the world. Adopt-A-Unit's goal is to develop supportive relationships with units before, during and after deployments to help deliver the vast network of resources the VFW has available to the military. Unfortunately, VFW Auxiliaries will no longer be eligible to request this money. This does not affect the VFW Auxiliaries' ability to request Foundation grants.

Additional information, links and forms are located on the VFW website:

<https://www.vfw.org/community/troop-support>

#### **Student Veteran Support Grant**

The VFW recognizes that both funding and support for our student veterans and dependents at institutions of higher learning can often be difficult to find. The **VFW's Student Veteran Support Grant** offers much needed assistance to support specific student veteran events. The grant, administered by the VFW Washington Office, focuses on supporting the overall student veteran population within the community, which consists of many student veterans at campuses across the country that are not affiliated with an Student Veterans of America chapter. The grants will be disbursed to a VFW Post or Department that has submitted an application, to support the student veterans at the university or college.

Additional information, links and forms are located on the VFW website:

<https://www.vfw.org/assistance/student-veterans-support>

## VFW Foundation Grants

- **VFW #StillServing Grant**  
The #StillServing Grant is offered exclusively to VFW Posts, Districts and their Auxiliaries to offset expenses incurred while doing community service projects.
- **Uniting to Combat Hunger Grant**  
The Uniting to Combat Hunger & Homelessness Grant is a limited matching grant available to VFW Posts or Auxiliaries for monetary, food, or item donations to local food banks, pantries or homeless relief organizations in their communities.
- **Post Assistance Grant**  
The Post Assistance Grant is offered exclusively to VFW Posts to offset expenses incurred for building repairs and equipment that enhances or restores the applicant organization's ability to serve veterans and their community.

More information about VFW Foundation Grants is located on the VFW website:

<https://www.vfw.org/community/community-initiatives/post-grants>

## Disaster Relief

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is accepting donations to help veterans, service members and military families impacted by natural disasters. The VFW's Disaster Relief Fund provides our organization with the opportunity to react quickly with immediate relief to those in the affected areas.

## Uniting to Combat Hunger

In 2018, the VFW and Humana created Uniting to Combat Hunger (UTCH) to actively address food insecurity across America with an emphasis on the military community. VFW Posts and Auxiliaries are integral to making a positive dent in food insecurity and veteran homelessness.

For more information about UTCH, please contact the VFW Foundation at [foundation@vfw.org](mailto:foundation@vfw.org).

## VFW Mental Wellness Campaign

The purpose of the project is to educate VFW and VFW Auxiliary members, veterans and communities about the important topic of mental health and wellness and offer proven tools to intervene on behalf of veterans in crisis.

In order to raise awareness, foster community engagement, improve research and provide intervention for those affected by invisible injuries and emotional stress, the VFW has teamed up with the nationwide organizations **Give an Hour** and the **Campaign to Change Direction, One Mind, PatientsLikeMe** and the **Elizabeth Dole Foundation** to combat this critical issue.

Find links and learn about resources and support to change the stigma surrounding mental health on the VFW website:

<https://www.vfw.org/assistance/mental-wellness>

## Veterans Crisis Line

The Veterans Crisis Line connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat or text. Veterans and their loved ones can dial 988 then press 1, chat online, or text 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

## Donations can be made online or by mail.

Donate online at [vfw.org/ways-to-help](https://vfw.org/ways-to-help), select the program you would like to donate to and click "Contribute."

Donate by mail by sending a check to:  
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Processing Center  
P.O. Box 2002  
Milford, NH 03055-2002

<https://vfw.org/donate/your-support-matters>

Please remember to earmark your check your donation will be immediately directed to the VFW programs where your support is most urgently needed.

## Other Resources

The VFW and VFW Auxiliary helped pass the Deborah Sampson Act that will enhance and improve VA programs and health services for women veterans and ensure they receive the care and support they need and have earned. It includes an expansion of the Women Veterans Call Center to include text messaging capability.

## Women Veterans Call Center:

Call or text: 855-829-6636 or 1-855-VA-WOMEN

## Women Veterans Health Care:

<https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/>

## VETERANS & FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM AWARDS

### **Awards for Auxiliaries:**

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event to celebrate/assist service members and/or veterans in the community. To include veterans job fairs, unit homecomings, mental health-related stand downs, etc.
  - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event to celebrate/assist service members or Veterans in your community.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the National Veterans & Family Support Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

### **Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:**

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of resources to assist veterans, service members and families.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

2. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Veterans & Family Support Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most outstanding activity and/or event to increase the support of veterans, service members and their families.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

3. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 59.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

# YOUTH ACTIVITIES AMBASSADOR



## SHANNON STANLEY

2296 Kentwood Drive  
Mansfield, OH 44903-9650  
419-961-7900  
stanleyshannon98@gmail.com

*Like seashells, we are beautiful and unique  
with a story to tell.*

When I joined the Auxiliary 20 years ago, I would never have dreamed that I would find such a great passion in working with today's youth and how it would help my love and commitment to the VFW Auxiliary grow. The youth of today are the members of the future and what we show them now by promoting patriotism, being kind and active in our veterans' lives and communities, will make the difference to how we are portrayed by their families.

### Reading Buddies

Be a "Reading Buddy." We sometimes forget that we have many children that are being left behind in schools due to issues concerning reading and comprehension, but if just one person in each Auxiliary could reach out and help a child become a better reader through reading one-on-one or electronically, imagine what an impact we could make in their daily lives and self-confidence. You can use the Patriotism through Literacy reading list in MALTA or talk with the child's parent, teacher or guardian that you have buddied up with to help find out what their interests are, and what reading level books to look for.

- Contact your local Family Readiness Groups, Scouts, schools and after-school program coordinators to see if they need volunteers to help read with the kids.

- Hold a Reading Buddy day at your VFW Post.
- Be a Reading Buddy by using Zoom or the telephone.
- Use the **#auxreadingbuddy** to promote what you and your Auxiliary are doing in our Reading Buddy program.
- Be sure to get proper permission from schools and parents and require that parents/guardians also attend Reading Buddy Post events.

### Youth Groups

The VFW Auxiliary is no stranger to working and assisting today's many different youth groups, but have you thought of thinking out of the box and sponsoring a school or after school program involving our youth? This could be a local youth Theatre group, Robotics/STEM group, Academic Challenge team, Key Club and Good News Clubs. Being an Auxiliary member and a part of something as special as the VFW Auxiliary gives us a family of brothers and sisters with a variety of special skills and ideas that can be shared to make a difference with today's youth.

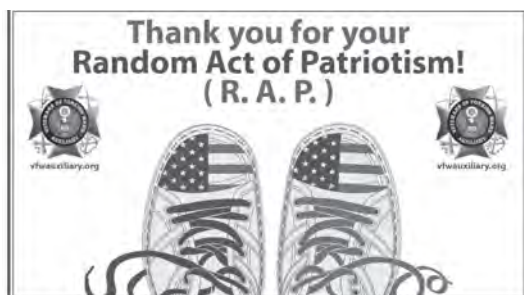
Be sure to get proper permission from schools and parents and require that parents/guardians also attend Reading Buddy Post events.

### Illustrating America

The Illustrating America Contest is a phenomenal way to get our younger students, and their families interested in learning more about what the VFW Auxiliary does for our heroes and communities. This contest is a way to not only give our elementary and middle school students a chance to be creative but to also promote the VFW Auxiliary Young American Creative Patriotic Art scholarship contest. Please see more information on page 52.

## R.A.P. Cards and Youth Acts of Kindness Certificates

Encouraging today's youth by letting them know that they have been seen is priceless in their eyes. I want to encourage you and your Auxiliary to continue to use the Random Acts of Patriotism cards for children that you see showing respect to the Flag, saying the pledge of the allegiance or honoring our country and heroes, but this year I would like to see our Auxiliaries using the Youth Acts of Kindness Certificate that is available in MALTA Member Resources. This would be given to youth being caught in the act of kindness. This is another way to celebrate our youth and to let them know that we see them. See examples as listed on this page.





## YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

### **Sponsoring and Working with Youth Groups**

#### **Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citations • Patriotic Youth Award**

#### **Patriotism through Literacy • Illustrating America**

The VFW Auxiliary is in a unique position to help teach our youth the skills to become responsible adults through serving our country, communities and veterans. We have a new generation of veterans who need the support of family, friends and country as they serve overseas and when they come home from conflicts abroad. Today's youth are the future of our nation.

#### **Sponsoring and Working with Youth Groups**

As part of the Auxiliary Youth Activities Program, an Auxiliary can sponsor a youth group and engage youth in any one of our Programs, including activities to honor our veterans or assist our service members and their families.

Take advantage of the service aspects some youth groups require. Many youth-focused organizations require various types of community service or activities to earn merits in their units. College-bound seniors earn school credit for some of these same activities.

Remember that involving youth in service to veterans in conjunction with your Auxiliary can bring new membership to your Auxiliary. When youth and the whole family are included, members feel more invested in your Auxiliary. Sponsorship of a youth group can create a bright future for your Auxiliary, veterans and the community as a whole.

#### **Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citations**

The Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citation is one way for Auxiliaries to recognize youth groups for their efforts and service projects honoring our veterans and assisting service members and their families. The Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans

Citation is available in MALTA Member Resources under Youth Activities.

#### **Patriotic Youth Award**

The Patriotic Youth Award is designed to recognize individual youth for their patriotism and/or support of our veterans, service members and their families. A fillable, printable version of The Patriotic Youth Award is available in MALTA Member Resources under Youth Activities.

#### **Patriotism through Literacy**

Promote and support reading among youth with this simple, fun and potentially free (use your local library) initiative. Introduce youth to historical figures and teach them about events in our nation's history while fostering a love of reading that can lead to a lifetime of learning.

Benefits of Patriotism through Literacy:

- Teach kids about various times in American history. Promote empathy and expose students to experiences unlike their own.
- Foster a love of books that leads to a lifetime of learning.
- Spend time with kids in the community in new, creative ways.
- Help youth gain better understanding of American history through nonfiction.

How can I participate in Patriotism through Literacy?

- Volunteer to read a historical or creative nonfiction picture book to kids at your local library.

- Donate historical fiction or creative nonfiction books to local schools, shelters or libraries.
- Host a read-a-thon and award small prizes (stickers, pins) for number of books or hours read.
- Run a writer's workshop for aspiring teen and tween authors at your Post Home.
- Invite an author of historical fiction or creative nonfiction to do a book talk/signing in your area.

Reading has many benefits, including improved grammar and writing skills, improved focus and concentration, and it helps children to understand and share the feelings of others; reading stretches our imagination. As Dr. Seuss said, "Reading can take you places you have never been before."

### Illustrating America

Open to any student in grades K-8 who is enrolled in a public, private or parochial school or home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions, or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application for which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen. Foreign exchange students and students age 15 or older are ineligible. National grade division winners of previous Illustrating America contests may enter the subsequent grade division but are ineligible for the same grade division of which they are a previous National winner.

Entries will be judged on patriotic theme and technique. The contest consists of three grade divisions: K-2, 3-5 and 6-8. The Department first-place winner in each grade division will be forwarded to Auxiliary National Headquarters.

There are National awards for first, second and third place in each grade division. The first, second and third place entry in each grade division will be displayed at National Convention.

#### Contest Rules:

- Entry must be completed during the current school year.
- Entry must be two dimensional.
- Entry must be on canvas or paper.

- Submit canvas entries on a stretcher frame or canvas board.
- Reinforce the back with heavy paper.
- Do not frame art with wood, metal, plastic or glass.
- Mats, including mounted and floating mats, may be used.
- Entries may not be smaller than 8" x 10" and not larger than 18" x 24", **INCLUDING** mat.
- Watercolor, pencil, pastel, charcoal, tempera, crayon, acrylic, pen, ink, oil, glitter, marker or other media may be used.
- If the American Flag is used, it **DOES NOT** need to conform to the Federal Flag Code in relation to colors or numbers of stars and stripes.
- Complete the contest entry form and submit it with art entry.
- Parent or guardian signature required on contest entry form.
- **Coloring sheets, digital art and photography are NOT accepted.**

#### Deadlines:

Entries received by:

VFW Auxiliary – March 31

Department – April 15

National Headquarters – May 5

Official form, details on requirements and contest rules can be found in MALTA Member Resources or on the VFW Auxiliary website.

### Involve Youth in ALL Auxiliary Programs

Youth play such an important role in our future. Encourage involvement from an early age in all Auxiliary Programs. Every young person can find their place when they are presented with a variety of opportunities to serve their communities and veterans. Teach youth about Auxiliary efforts to respect and take pride in our country.

#### Project Examples

- Marching in patriotic holiday parades.
- Help veterans, service members and their families with yard work or household repairs.
- Sending cards or small gifts to the VFW National Home to support families.
- Planning card- and letter-writing events to send mail to our troops overseas or veterans in VA facilities.

- Organizing assembly, collection and delivery of care packages for troops.
- Teaching computer skills to veterans.
- Visiting and volunteering in VA and non-VA facilities. Raising funds for a community

### **Youth Group Examples for VFW Auxiliary Sponsorship**

- Youth sports teams and church youth groups
- School clubs and after-school programs
- Home-school associations
- Youth community service groups
- Service learning and civic engagement departments in high schools

### **Make Your Auxiliary Accessible to Today's Youth**

It has never been so easy to communicate your cause and events to the world. Social media as teaching and information tools have natural collaborative elements allowing our youth to view and comment on each other's activities. They are tweeting on X, posting on Facebook, instantly sending pictures on Instagram and Snapchat and subscribing to YouTube channels. Get online and see what's new!

### **VFW Scout of the Year Program**

Some of our earliest ties to the community involve youth groups and perhaps none are stronger or more lasting than the relationship between the VFW and America's scouting organizations.

The VFW Scout of the Year program recognizes members of the Boy Scouts of Scouting America and Girl Scouts of the Girl Scouts of America for their standout citizenship, patriotism and love of country.

Official form, details and rules are located at:  
<https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/scout-of-the-year>

# YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM AWARDS

## **Awards for Auxiliaries:**

1. Most creative and/or unique activity and/or event of the VFW Auxiliary working with a youth group.
  - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most creative and/or unique activity and/or event of the VFW Auxiliary working with a youth group.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Youth Activities Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department Youth Activities Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department winning entry form to the National Youth Activities Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the winning VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

## **Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:**

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Youth Activities Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of the reading buddy initiative.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 64.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

2025-2026

# YEAR-END REPORTS

# VFW Auxiliary National Year-End Report Worksheet Americanism 2025-2026

This form is for statistical purposes only.

The Department Chairman must submit this report form to their Department President by May 1.

This report is to be processed in MALTA by the Department President by May 10.

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of participating VFW Auxiliaries: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that promoted, participated in and/or recognized, any patriotic day and/or branch of service birthdays. \_\_\_\_\_

2. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that distributed and/or presented American Flags and/or POW/MIA Flags. \_\_\_\_\_

3. The number of American Flags and/or POW/MIA Flags distributed and/or presented by VFW Auxiliaries. \_\_\_\_\_

4. The number of Patriotic Appreciation Citations, Certificates of Appreciation or Respect for the Flag Citations presented to citizens and/or businesses in recognition of their displaying the American Flag, POW/MIA Flag and/or other displays of American pride. \_\_\_\_\_

Department Chairman signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Conference: \_\_\_\_\_

# VFW Auxiliary National Year-End Report Worksheet Auxiliary Outreach 2025-2026

This form is for statistical purposes only.

The Department Chairman must submit this report form to their Department President by May 1.

This report is to be processed in MALTA by the Department President by May 10.

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of participating VFW Auxiliaries: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries as a group that partnered with another organization not affiliated with the VFW or VFW Auxiliary. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The number of organizations that VFW Auxiliaries partnered with during the year. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The number of combined members and/or VFW Auxiliary hours volunteered with another organization not affiliated with the VFW or VFW Auxiliary. \_\_\_\_\_

Department Chairman signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Conference: \_\_\_\_\_

# VFW Auxiliary National Year-End Report Worksheet “Buddy”® Poppy & VFW National Home 2025-2026

This form is for statistical purposes only.

The Department Chairman must submit this report form to their Department President by May 1.

This report is to be processed in MALTA by the Department President by May 10.

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of participating VFW Auxiliaries: \_\_\_\_\_

## **VFW “Buddy”® Poppy**

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that held VFW “Buddy”® Poppy drives with or without their VFW Post. \_\_\_\_\_

2. The number of VFW “Buddy”® Poppies that were distributed. \_\_\_\_\_

3. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that participated in the VFW “Buddy”® Poppy Display Contest. \_\_\_\_\_

## **VFW National Home**

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that promoted the VFW National Home. \_\_\_\_\_

2. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that promoted the VFW National Home Helpline. \_\_\_\_\_

3. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that purchased at least one VFW National Home Life Membership in the current Program Year. \_\_\_\_\_

4. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that purchased at least one VFW National Home Tribute Brick in the current Program Year. \_\_\_\_\_

Department Chairman signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Conference: \_\_\_\_\_

# VFW Auxiliary National Year-End Report Worksheet Historian & Media Relations 2025-2026

This form is for statistical purposes only.

The Department Chairman must submit this report form to their Department President by May 1.

This report is to be processed in MALTA by the Department President by May 10.

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of participating VFW Auxiliaries: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that communicated quarterly to each of their members via email, mail, text or phone call.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that have a Facebook page with or without the VFW Post.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that have a website with or without the VFW Post.

\_\_\_\_\_

Department Chairman signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Conference: \_\_\_\_\_

# VFW Auxiliary National Year-End Report Worksheet Hospital 2025-2026

This form is for statistical purposes only.

The Department Chairman must submit this report form to their Department President by May 1.

This report is to be processed in MALTA by the Department President by May 10.

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of participating VFW Auxiliaries: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The number of VFW Auxiliary members that volunteered at any VA and/or non-VA medical facility. (VFW Auxiliary members to be counted one time only per year.) \_\_\_\_\_

2. The total number of hours that VFW Auxiliary members volunteered at any VA and/or non-VA medical facility. \_\_\_\_\_

3. The total number of hours that Sponsored Volunteers and/or students volunteered under the VFW Auxiliary sponsorship and supervision at any VA and/or non-VA medical facility. \_\_\_\_\_

4. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that promoted, participated in or co-hosted any activity with their VFW Post. \_\_\_\_\_

5. The total dollar amount spent on all Hospital Program-related items and/or projects. \_\_\_\_\_

Department Chairman signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Conference: \_\_\_\_\_

# VFW Auxiliary National Year-End Report Worksheet Legislative 2025-2026

This form is for statistical purposes only.

The Department Chairman must submit this report form to their Department President by May 1.

This report is to be processed in MALTA by the Department President by May 10.

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of participating VFW Auxiliaries: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that promoted, participated in and/or hosted or co-hosted activities regarding the VFW Priority Goals with or without their VFW Post.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. The number of VFW Auxiliary members who contacted their legislators on veterans' issues by any means (example: emails, letters, postcards, phone calls, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

3. The number of VFW Auxiliary members who attended events where they could interact with legislators (example: legislative conferences, town halls, meet-and-greets, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

Department Chairman signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Conference: \_\_\_\_\_

# VFW Auxiliary National Year-End Report Worksheet Scholarships 2025-2026

This form is for statistical purposes only.

The Department Chairman must submit this report form to their Department President by May 1.

This report is to be processed in MALTA by the Department President by May 10.

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of participating VFW Auxiliaries: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Continuing Education Scholarship Contest**

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that promoted the Continuing Education Scholarship Contest.

## **Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest**

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that promoted the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest.

2. The number of students that submitted art entries to VFW Auxiliaries for judging.

3. The number of art entries submitted to the Department for judging.

## **3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest**

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that promoted the 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest.

2. The number of students that submitted art entries to VFW Auxiliaries for judging.

3. The number of art entries submitted to the Department for judging.

# VFW Auxiliary National Year-End Report Worksheet Scholarships continued 2025-2026

## VFW Scholarships

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that assisted their VFW Post in promoting or conducting the VFW National Patriot's Pen Essay Contest. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that assisted their VFW Post in promoting or conducting the VFW National Voice of Democracy Audio Essay Contest. \_\_\_\_\_

## Recognition

1. The number of Auxiliaries that hosted an awards ceremony to recognize awardees and participants in any/all contests. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The total dollar amount and/or value of awards presented by Auxiliaries, Districts and Departments in any/all contests. \_\_\_\_\_

Department Chairman signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Conference: \_\_\_\_\_

# VFW Auxiliary National Year-End Report Worksheet Veterans & Family Support 2025-2026

This form is for statistical purposes only.

The Department Chairman must submit this report form to their Department President by May 1.

This report is to be processed in MALTA by the Department President by May 10.

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of participating VFW Auxiliaries: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that promoted, participated, hosted or co-hosted with their VFW Post activities for any VFW Program. (Examples: Disaster Relief, Military Assistance Program (MAP), National Veterans Service (NVS), Unmet Needs, Veterans & Military Suicide Prevention and Mental Health awareness.)  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that provided direct aid to veterans, service members and/or their families (Examples: meals, transportation, cards, packages, donations, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. The approximate number of veterans, service members and/or their families assisted.  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. The total monetary donations and/or value of donations and goods/services provided to veterans, service members and/or their families.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Department Chairman signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Conference: \_\_\_\_\_

# VFW Auxiliary National Year-End Report Worksheet Youth Activities 2025-2026

This form is for statistical purposes only.

The Department Chairman must submit this report form to their Department President by May 1.

This report is to be processed in MALTA by the Department President by May 10.

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of participating VFW Auxiliaries: \_\_\_\_\_

## Youth Groups

1. The number of youth groups that VFW Auxiliaries worked with during the current Program Year. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The number of youth that VFW Auxiliaries worked with during the current Program Year. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The number of Youth Groups Supporting Our Veterans Citations awarded. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that participated in Patriotism through Literacy. \_\_\_\_\_
5. The number of books donated in participation of Patriotism through Literacy. \_\_\_\_\_

## Illustrating America Art Contest

1. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that promoted the Illustrating America Art Contest. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The number of students that submitted art entries to VFW Auxiliaries for judging. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The number of art entries submitted to the Department for judging. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The number of VFW Auxiliaries that hosted an awards ceremony to recognize awardees and participants in this contest. \_\_\_\_\_
5. The total dollar amount and/or value of awards presented by VFW Auxiliaries, Districts and Departments. \_\_\_\_\_

Department Chairman signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Conference: \_\_\_\_\_



