

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

Ocala, Florida

February, 2015

“Team Florida Together”



VFW COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

I want to personally thank all of the Post and District leaders and members who attended the Department Mid-Winter Conference. We hold these Conferences and Council meetings because they are required by the National By-laws but even more importantly we meet in comradery and friendship to ensure that members are informed and have all of the necessary tools to be successful in our mission of "Veterans Helping Veterans, Team Florida Together". If you attended I would appreciate your feedback about the value of the meetings and your suggestions for future conference agendas. As an organization we will only improve with input from everyone. All too often in the VFW we complain at the canteen or in the hospitality rooms; sharing our comments about how things could be done better but we don't provide the Department leaders constructive and well thought out ideas for the generation of real and productive change. Change just to change is usually disruptive but change for the betterment of the organization's effectiveness is necessary. I welcome your comments and ideas. As we move into the second half of the VFW year I know you will continue to work hard to achieve success and support the goals and ideals of the VFW. I see so many great things going on as I travel around the state and I am constantly amazed at the great work and dedication that I see at Posts and in the local communities. Thank you again for all that you do and I look forward to hearing your feedback.

"No One Does More for Veterans"

T Wayne Markham
Commander
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Department of Florida

**CALLING ALL GOLFERS
(AND VETERAN SUPPORTERS)
Let's make this year's event the best ever.....**

The Department of Florida Help a Hero Golf Tournament is scheduled for **Friday, April 24, 2015** at the Sanctuary Ridge Golf Club, Clermont, Florida. There are many different ways to contribute to this fund raising event for the Department Help a Hero program (formerly Because We Care). Posts can sponsor a team and play or solicit outside donors for hole and/or team sponsorships. Remember that Posts receive 20 All State points for each team sponsored and 3 points for each \$100 hole sponsorship they bring in. The intent is for Posts to work with their community partners and solicit as many hole sponsorships as they can for this worthy cause. The tournament flyer, sponsor sheet and team sign-up sheet are available on the Department Web Site under Department announcements. For more information contact Alan Ayoubee at 386-663-4880 (aayoubee@flvfw.org), Gary Mobbs at 727-868-5299 (statechap@flvfw.org) or the Department Adjutant Karen Nigara at 352-622-5126 (knigara@flvfw.org). Let's all get out and support the cause whether you are golfing, helping, or just watching.

MEMBERSHIP

Continuing membership webinar training will be held on the second Wednesday of each month from 12:00 noon to 1:00 PM. The next Membership webinar link will be sent to the Department HQ on Monday, February 16th and conducted via Adobe Direct Connect Wednesday, February 18th. The topic will be Post, District and State/Department Query. All interested parties are encouraged to participate. If your membership Chairman or interested members want to participate contact the Department Adjutant for instructions and assistance. Each session is recorded for those unable to participate live and the recordings are available on the VFW Training Hub at <https://www.vfw.org/Training/>.

The Department Membership Director will continue to send out lists of VFW "At Large" members. You are encouraged to reach out to those in your Post and District area and encourage them to become active and contributing members of a Post in their community.

Kansas City Spree Membership Award.

The first place Post Commander in each of the ten Post divisions with over 50 members and the first place District Commander in the six District divisions and their spouse/guest can win this exciting Kansas City award trip April 30 thru May 3, 2015. Post and District Commanders must be 100% in membership and Posts must achieve the 85% retention by March 31, 2015 to qualify for this award. The award winners will receive round-trip travel to Kansas City and a fun-filled weekend that may include touring, shopping, a major league baseball game and a compete tour of National Headquarters.

100% COMMANDER DRAWING

Every Post with over 50 members that exceeds 100% in membership and achieves the 85% retention goal and District Commanders that exceed 100% in membership on or before June 15, 2015, will be placed in a drawing to attend the 116th National Convention in Pittsburgh PA. 20 Post Commanders and 12 District Commanders will be drawn to win round trip airfare to the Convention and a \$599 stipend to help defray expenses.

CONGRATULATIONS TO: **WASHINGTON DC LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE EARLY BIRD** **AWARD WINNER**

WAY TO GO !!

Division 7

VFW Post 4423, District 11

Commander Ronald Price

Quartermaster Robert Marchiano

PROGRAMS

VFW Posts and Auxiliaries reported donating almost 3.9 million volunteer ours and over \$20 million towards community service work from May 1 to October 32, 2014. The total value of our volunteers' efforts is valued at over \$107 million.



The Department of Florida Voice of Democracy, Patriots Pen and Citizenship Education winners were honored at the Youth Achievement Banquet at the Mid-Winter Convention. The

District winners and their families were honored for their outstanding achievements and thanked for their participation in this Core VFW Program. Very shortly the State Winners will be available on the Web – Watch the VFW National Web Site in late February to see the faces and hear the performances of the state winners of the Voice of Democracy audio-essay contest.

Congratulations to the winners and the sponsoring Posts for all of your hard work.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

1ST Place: Eleanor Keys, District 10, Post 10476

2nd Place: Garyson Campbell, District 17, Post 10555

3rd Place: Mary K. Collins, District 12, Post 10140

4th Place: John Ryan Gnan, District 18, Post 10139

5th Place, Maguire Ward, District 13, Post 8463

PATRIOTS PEN

1st Place: Caleb Sheppard, District 7, Post 10087

2nd Place: Abigail Renne Islam, District 14, Post 2811

3rd Place: Mason Yaskovic, District 8, Post 4534

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEACHER OF THE YEAR

**K – 5th Grades – District 8 – Sharon Jaszczak
Apollo Elementary School, Titusville, FL**

**6th – 8th Grades – District 10 – Melissa Russell
Punta Gorda Middle School, Punta Gorda, FL**

**9th – 12th Grades – District 6 – Alexa Ann Murray
Fleming Island High School, Fleming Island, FL**

Junior ROTC Rifle Match

Did you know that the Florida Veterans of Foreign Wars sponsors a Junior ROTC Rifle Match in conjunction with Brandon High School? The JROTC Rifle Match was held at Brandon High School on Saturday, 31 January. Department Chairman Pat Love and eight other VFW members and volunteers served as competition organizers and judges for the students who competed in several rifle events. If you are interested in getting involved in this next year please contact the Department ROTC / JROTC Chairman Pat Love or the Department Adjutant.

Program Dates to Watch For

EMT, Law Enforcement and Firefighters:

April 1: Post winners to Department Chairman Gary Johnson

Posts are encouraged to recognize their Public Servant nominees whether they win at Department level or not. For that purpose, there are citations offered in the 2014-15 VFW Store catalog on page 68. You may also view them at www.vfwstore.org. You are encouraged to appropriately recognize your Post winners in a public ceremony.

Scout of the Year:

March 1: Scout entries to Post

April 1: Post entries to Department Scouting Chairman (Bruce Sitki: sitki@aol.com)

May 1: Department entry to National

Suggested Activities for May 1 Loyalty Day and June 14 Flag Day Programs

It is not too early to start planning for May 1 Loyalty Day and June 14 Flag Day. Posts are encouraged to celebrate 1 May as Loyalty Day, a day to reaffirm our strong allegiance to our flag, Country, and the men and women in uniform through active participation in patriotic programs. Work with your local schools, churches and businesses to celebrate our solemn allegiance to the United States of America. Look for Loyalty Day speeches (and other patriotic days) by logging on to www.vfw.org and clicking on Resources and Holiday Patriotic Speeches. Commanders are reminded that these program reports will go toward 2015-2016 All State points and cannot be reported until after the 2014 – 2015 program reports are cleared. If you have questions contact the Department Adjutant or the Programs Chairperson.

VFW SPORT CLIPS HELP A HERO SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS **2015 SPRING SEMESTER**

Congratulations to the 2015 VFW Sport Clips Help Hero Scholarship recipients from Florida.

Jeffrey A. Mackowski, Miami Florida; Florida International University

Jarrett M. McDonald, St Augustine, FL; Villanova University

Brandon L. Miller, St Augustine, FL; University of Phoenix

Elena C. Stofle, Tallahassee, FL; Florida State University

PUBLICATIONS CONTEST

Changes have been made to the VFW Publications Contest. This year the publications contest will be judged in the categories of Department and District / Post (now combined). District and Post newsletters will be judged on overall design and content. Three places; a grand first place, silver second and bronze third will be awarded. In addition, a new competition for Best Feature Story will be judged. The story must be a published article of at least 300 words. It can be originally written by your newspaper staff or by a free-lance writer or be reprinted from a newspaper within Florida. Examples of eligible subjects include National Guard/Reserve unit deployments to Afghanistan/Iraq, troop-support activities, VFW Programs, dedication of state

memorials, state commemorative events for the 50th anniversary of Vietnam and editorials advocating positions on Veteran issues within the state. The new contest for feature stories is retroactive a decade to 2004, so you can submit articles published on home-state units supported while serving overseas in the war zones. In the future, entries will be from the current calendar year. **Post / District publication entries should be forwarded to the Department Adjutant no later than 20 March, 2015.** Department winners will be forwarded on for National judging. For questions contact the Department Adjutant.

NATIONAL POST OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

The National Outstanding Post Community Service Award recognizes Posts who have done an outstanding job in serving their local community through VFW programs. Outstanding Posts should be able to demonstrate high positive visibility in the community reflecting efforts that include but are not limited to hosting and or participating in civic and patriotic events, active involvement with local military units as well as effective involvement in the schools with our scholarship programs, teacher awards and Veterans in the Classroom. Active membership recruitment and an effective Buddy Poppy Program should also be considered. National winners are recognized at the National Convention. Post entries for this prestigious award should be received at the Department Headquarters no later than 20 April, 2015. The Post entry form can be found on the Department web site under Department Forms. For questions contact the Department Adjutant.

ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS **(AND OTHER GOOD STUFF TO KNOW)**



IMPORTANT REMINDERS – PLEASE TAKE NOTE

Inspections Post and District Commanders and Inspectors are reminded that the Inspection period for Post Inspections is 1 December 2014 – 28 February 2015. All inspections are due to Department Headquarters 30 days following the inspection with a complete narrative of corrective actions taken.

Audits Several Posts remain delinquent in submitting quarterly Post audits for the quarters ending in June and September. Post Commanders and Quartermasters are strongly encouraged to ask for help if you cannot get these completed and turned in immediately. The audits for the quarter ending in December 2014 were due no later than 31 January 2015; let's clean up the battlefield and get them completed and turned in as soon as possible.

IRS Form 990's IRS Form 990 was due to the IRS in November 2014. Those who submitted are requested to provide a copy of the confirmation received from the IRS. If you have questions contact the Department Quartermaster.

MEN'S AUXILIARY TO THE VFW

Post Commanders are reminded that Post Men's Auxiliary Treasurer Bonds were due September 30, 2014. To date ten Men's Auxiliaries have not submitted verification of Treasurer Bonds. Please check and contact Robin at HQ if you need assistance.

THE VFW SALUTES AMERICA'S GULF WAR VETERANS

THE GULF WAR SERVED AS A MODEL MILITARY OPERATION

January 17 marked 24 years since the official commencement of the Persian Gulf War. With this important conflict falling in time between the war in Vietnam and those of Iraq and Afghanistan, unfortunately its veterans are sometimes forgotten.

But the VFW remembers, and the Florida VFW takes this opportunity to salute the service and sacrifice of the brave Americans who drove Saddam Hussein's military forces from Kuwait.

The Gulf War served as a model military operation. America's service members accomplished their mission on schedule, and without fail. Despite the war's relatively short duration, each of its veterans played an integral role in shaping a truly historical event.

Approximately 695,000 servicemen and women served in the Kuwait theater leading up to and during the war. It left 467 wounded and claimed the lives of another 374. Though victory was expeditiously achieved, it did not come without great cost.

In addition to the lives lost and visible injuries sustained, many service members returned home with mysterious illnesses later termed “Gulf War Syndrome.” Its lasting effects constitute the war’s enduring legacy.

Like their predecessors, veterans of the Gulf War have left their mark in history and we are all indebted to them for their selfless service. **Make sure you reach out to these Gulf War Veterans in your community and invite them to your Post functions and meetings.**

The Home Depot Foundation Grants are open on February 1, 2015

Applications for the Home Dept (HD) Foundation Community Impact Grant can be accessed beginning February 1, 2015. Eligible VFW Posts may receive up to \$5,000 to fix up their buildings; however, of course there is no guarantee of funding. To begin the process, go to the following internet link: //homedepotfoundation.org/page/applying-for-a-grant. To help you complete the application, the VFW Foundation will once again prepare a step-by-step how-to-apply guide. Any deviation from this guide will most likely result in not being able to submit the application. To receive this how-to-apply guide, send an email to foundation@vfw.org. Type the following in the email subject heading: Home Depot Guide Request. The application must be filled out via the internet only.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION PROGRAM.

This program is designed to provide recognition and awards to VFW members who volunteer their time to outside organizations. Recognition is in the form of certificates and/or lapel pins which are given to volunteers who have completed the number of hours prescribed for those awards. For more information, see the VFW Community Activities and Citizenship Education Chairmen’s Guide available by logging on to www.vfw.org and go to the Document Repository.

POW / MIA FLAG – OFFICIAL DISPLAY DAYS.

Public Law 105-85 indicates the days that federal agencies, military installations and U.S. post offices are required to display the POW/MIA flag. The days are: Armed Forces Day, May 16, 2015; Memorial Day, May 25, 2015; Flag Day, June 14; National POW/MIA Day September 18, 2015; and Veterans Day, November 11. To purchase a POW/MIA flag, go to <http://www.vfwstore.org/products/GP237>.

High School Diplomas for Honorably Discharged Florida Veterans

In 2013 the Florida Legislature passed a bill with provisions for honorably discharged Veterans to gain their high school diplomas. Under the provisions of this legislation most honorably discharged Veterans can apply to have a standard High School diploma. To find out more go to www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/veterans-diplomas.shtml.

Don't let your lack of a High School diploma hold you back from employment and advancement.

HEADQUARTERS OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Your VFW State Headquarters is here to help you. The office in Ocala Florida is open Monday – Friday 800 to 4:30. After hours please leave a message with your name and contact information and we will get back to you as soon as we return to the office. We are located at 543 N.E. Sanchez Avenue in Ocala. Our mission is to make you successful – let us know what we can do to better support you.

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