VFW members are #StillServing in communities around the world. They work to help others as they did while in uniform, all while exemplifying the best of the American spirit.
Army veteran Stephen Meyers checks out Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indiana on March 4, 2020, during his PTSD walk that began on Feb. 15 in Kansas City, Mo. Meyers, a Gold Legacy life member of VFW Post 5789 in Lee's Summit, Mo., is walking 6,000 miles through 20 states to talk about PTSD in an effort to help those afflicted by the unseen illness. He hopes his walk starts a national conversation about the stigmas surrounding PTSD. Photo courtesy of Indianapolis Motor Speedway
Brian Daniels, Iraq War veteran and a member of VFW’s Department of Indiana, stands in front of the house in which he grew up in Eaton Rapids, Mich., on the campus of VFW’s National Home for Children. Daniels credits his time at the home for his desire to serve in the military. Photo by Kyle Bultman
VFW’s Spirit of Community was Amplified During Global Pandemic

As VFW’s Commander-in-Chief, I could not be more proud of how our organization pushed onward during the global pandemic. In true VFW fashion, our members sprang to action making face masks, delivering food, gathering medical supplies and of course, doing “buddy checks.”

During such a bleak time, VFW members exemplified the very best of our country. They adapted and held meetings virtually, just as we at the national level also implemented alternative ways to keep VFW moving forward.

Just prior to COVID-19, VFW launched its #StillServing campaign. Using the #StillServing hashtag, veterans share their stories of continued service on social media.

Looking at VFW’s numbers, it’s obvious that our 1.5 million VFW and Auxiliary volunteers are doing tremendous work around the world.

In 2019-20, VFW awarded $2.1 million in scholarships and awards to high school students in the Voice of Democracy audio-essay competition. Another $1.4 million was awarded to middle school participants in the Patriot’s Pen writing competition. Furthermore, since 2014, VFW has awarded nearly $7.9 million to 1,764 veterans and service members through VFW’s Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship program.

One of VFW’s most important objectives, we also assist veterans through our nationwide network of service officers. We make a difference for veterans and their families.

VFW has a network of more than 2,000 VA-accredited VFW representatives across the country. We also staff service officers at 24 Benefits Delivery at Discharge sites on military installations. Our service officers there offer VA benefits help to active-duty troops who are soon to be discharged.

VFW’s National Veterans Service department is a beacon for veterans needing claims assistance. And the best part is that we do this all free of charge. In 2020, VFW recovered nearly $10 billion for veterans. Of that, $1.4 billion was for new clients. We also help with direct financial assistance. I’m proud to say that VFW’s Unmet Needs program has distributed nearly $12 million to nearly 11,000 military and veterans families since 2004. The program provides up to $1,500 to veterans, service members and their families during times of financial hardship. It continues to touch so many lives every day.

This is just a glimpse into all VFW does to continue serving. By letting the world know, we will continue helping for years to come.
WE ARE THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

From left, Aleksandr Morosky with Post 7788 in Milford, Conn., and Kristina Keenan of Post 605 in Paris, France, relax with other volunteers at a Habitat for Humanity build in January 2020 in Washington, D.C. Morosky and Keenan are just two examples of vets who are #StillServing in their communities. Photo courtesy of Kristina Keenan
VFW TAKES PRIDE IN ITS COMMITMENT TO VETERANS AND TODAY’S MILITARY.
OUR PROGRAMS ENSURE NO ONE IS FORGOTTEN.

You've most likely heard of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The initials “VFW” are emblazoned on many of our 6,081 Posts worldwide. We are the nation’s oldest major veterans group, and we've been a part of the country’s social fabric for 121 years.

We are an organization of more than 1 million veterans who have served overseas in war zones or areas demanding arduous duty, from mountains and deserts to jungles and swamps.

What you might not know about is our continuing commitment to country and community. Our mission extends to troops serving overseas today and their families waiting back home.


To serve our veterans, the military and our communities.
To advocate on behalf of all veterans.

Our Vision: Ensure that veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country.

VFW MEMBERS CARE PASSIONATELY ABOUT SERVING THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS.

JUST AS WE PLEDGED DURING OUR TIME IN UNIFORM, WE AGAIN VOW TO SUSTAIN A LIFELONG COMMITMENT TO THE NATION AND OUR COMMUNITIES.

A VENERABLE ORGANIZATION
VFW traces its origins to 1899 when 13 Spanish-American War veterans convened in Columbus, Ohio. By 1914, this group had merged with two other Spanish-American/Philippine War veterans organizations to become known collectively as the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

VFW’s supreme governing body is its National Convention. Each July, thousands of VFW members vote as registered delegates, determining policy by adopting resolutions and making important business decisions.

VFW’s National Headquarters is located in Kansas City, Mo., where the organization’s administration and programs-related efforts are coordinated. Issue-oriented activities are developed and implemented in VFW’s Washington Office in the nation’s capital.

VFW-AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS
Joining VFW to accomplish its mission are the VFW Auxiliary, the VFW Foundation, the VFW National Home and the Military Order of the Cootie, which is composed of VFW members dedicated to assisting hospitalized veterans.

NONPROFIT STATUS
VFW is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code and contributions are deductible under section 170(c).
NEARLY $10 BILLION

TOTAL RECOVERED IN 2020

$1.4 BILLION
Recovered for new clients last year

NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE IN 2020
For more than a century, VFW has had an office in Washington, D.C., devoted to serving veterans. VFW’s National Veterans Service (NVS), located on Capitol Hill, helps veterans and their dependents acquire their earned VA benefits.

Annually, NVS budgets hundreds of thousands of dollars for VFW Departments (state-run offices) to assist veterans in filing claims for benefits. This service is offered free to all veterans, regardless of VFW membership.

When COVID-19 reared its ugly head in 2020, NVS was undeterred thanks to its service officers’ ability to work remotely.

“VFW seamlessly transitioned to remotely assist veterans during the shutdown,” NVS Director Ryan Gallucci said. “We had purchased laptops for our service officers at the end of 2019 so they already had the technology in place to keep working with veterans.”

One such service officer is Rachael Garcia. As an accredited VFW service officer, Garcia spends time at VFW Post 152 in North Kingstown, R.I., helping veterans in the southern part of the state file disability claims. Garcia, a member of Post 152, is an Air Force veteran who served in the Iraq War in 2006 with the 407th Security Forces Squadron as a gunner and squad leader.

When Garcia, isn’t performing duties as a service officer, she’s working with student veterans at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston. As the assistant director of veterans affairs and military programs, Garcia helps students obtain housing on campus and GI Bill benefits. But as a VFW service officer, she also can help students file VA claims.

Garcia said she started working as a service officer while attending Oregon’s Portland State University in 2015.

“While obtaining my master’s degree, I went to a VFW service office at the VA medical center in Vancouver (Wash.) to see if I could work there for my work-study,” Garcia said. “There, I started to learn more about how to work with veterans.”

After completing her college credit, Garcia continued her work at the VA facility as a part-time employee. She said she “fell in love” with the work.

“I maintained my accreditation as a service officer when I moved on to work for the University of Rhode Island,” Garcia said. “I wanted to be a service officer so that I could continue to file claims and stay privy to a lot of information and benefits that I could relay to my students.”

Gallucci said that he is impressed with the work Garcia and other service officers do in their respective communities. “She is doing some amazing work at the University of Rhode Island,” Gallucci said. “Her work with veterans could very well serve as a model for assisting student veterans nationwide.”

Rachael Garcia, an Iraq War veteran and member of VFW Post 152 in North Kingstown, R.I., attends a National Veterans Service course in January 2020 in Annapolis, Md. Garcia helps veterans in southern Rhode Island file disability claims and advises student veterans at the University of Rhode Island.

Photo courtesy of Rachel Garcia
Sept. 15 marked the fifth annual Day to Change Direction. Since 2016, VFW and Give an Hour have partnered to bring about change in the way the world views mental health.

When a Day to Change Direction was introduced at VFW Posts around the world four years ago, the goal was, and still is, to bring communities together for a day of service, such as picking up trash, planting trees or cleaning parks.

Founded in 2005 by Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen, Give an Hour is a Bethesda, Md.-based non-profit group that offers the skills of professional mental health providers to active-duty troops, veterans and their families.

When Van Dahlen was named executive director of the President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS), her husband, Dr. Randy Phelps, was appointed CEO.

Calling VFW one of Give an Hour’s “most treasured partners,” Phelps said the two groups working together has been a good thing for the mental health community.

“VFW is like the Post Office, it is in every community,” Phelps said. “We are looking forward to the future.”

Phelps noted that a major part of the Day to Change Direction is the public awareness of the five signs of emotional suffering: personality change, agitation, withdrawal, poor self-care and hopelessness.

For Ryan Gallucci, director of VFW’s National Veterans Service, the VFW/Give an Hour relationship has been nothing but positive.

“Give an Hour has trained our service officers twice,” Gallucci said. “When we started out, the objective was to promote mental well-being in an effort to stem the tide of veteran suicide.”

Part of that training, Gallucci said, was having a Give an Hour social worker provide an in-depth module of understanding while not internalizing the stress the clients may be experiencing.

Phelps said he is working with Gallucci now on a pilot program involving emotional life skills training. About 12 people in VFW’s Washington, D.C., office took part in an abbreviated version of the program.

“Those of us who sat through it were in awe of what we took away from it,” Gallucci said.”The way I felt after the training, is that we had built a strong emotionally supportive team ready to run through a brick wall for one another.”

Phelps noted that six, two-hour sessions over a six-week period is ideal for VFW Posts. Gallucci said VFW will be looking at Posts to test this program. He added that it will be unique to each community in which it’s deployed and should reflect the available community resources.
An Emerging Leader

The trials and tribulations of Melanie Foster led her up the ranks of the VFW Department of Idaho since joining in 2010, and she’s been trailblazing ever since.

The 35-year-old, who served as a combat engineer and bridge-crew member patrolling the Tigris River during Operation Iraqi Freedom, joined the VFW five years after her discharge, crediting two local veterans — Wayne Moberg and Riley Maxwell — with introducing her to the organization.

“They were handing out Buddy Poppies at the grocery store and already knew my name because I owned the local newspaper,” Foster said. “They invited me to attend a Post meeting, and I remember thinking what a great group of people this was.”

In the weeks that followed, Foster was introduced to then Department Commander George Peacock and Chief of Staff Dale Smith at a Yellow Ribbon Event welcoming home the state’s National Guard troops after a deployment to Iraq.

“The VFW and all its services stood alongside Foster in her time of need, which came in early 2017 after being diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer and prompting her to undergo a double mastectomy.

“I was recently divorced and self-employed, so I had no insurance and had not completely enrolled in VA healthcare yet,” Foster said. “If I would not have had my Post service officer, Harvey McCoy, working with me to help me through the VA paperwork and process, I dare to think what could have happened.”

The abundance of support and services from the VFW in her time of need prompted Foster to use her experience and life skills as the driving force to help other veterans like her. And in 2020, Foster became both the youngest veteran and first female to take the helm as Department commander of Idaho.

“Hearing them talk about what the VFW is and what it does, I knew it was something I wanted to be a part of,” Foster said. “So I finally joined the VFW in 2010 while my then husband was deployed.”

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Melanie Foster, commander of VFW’s Department of Idaho, uses her personal story of VFW’s influence on her life to help female and younger veterans access VFW’s programs to improve their lives. Foster, who served as a combat engineer in the Iraq War, is both the youngest veteran and the first female veteran to lead the Department of Idaho. Photo courtesy of Melanie Foster.
FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, VFW HAS PLAYED AN INSTRUMENTAL ROLE IN NEARLY EVERY PIECE OF VETERANS’ LEGISLATION SIGNED INTO LAW.

2019-2020 VFW Commander-in-Chief William “Doc” Schmitz testifies on March 4, 2020 before a joint hearing of the House and Senate VA committees during the 2020 VFW Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. Schmitz was backed by hundreds of VFW members and activists during his testimony.

Photo by Bob Knudsen
VFW advocates daily on Capitol Hill to improve care and benefits for the nation’s service members, veterans and their families. Our strength and influence is backed by the passion of VFW and its Auxiliary’s more than 1.5 million members.

The VFW’s National Legislative Service (NLS) monitors all legislation affecting active-duty service members, veterans and their families. They regularly testify at congressional committee hearings and interact directly with Congress and the administration to accomplish VFW’s annual priority goals and safeguard against bad proposals that would erode or eliminate earned benefits.

For more than a century, VFW has played an instrumental role in nearly every piece of veterans’ legislation signed into law. At the grassroots level, the VFW Action Corps enables more than 300,000 VFW members and patriotic supporters to stay informed on issues facing the veteran and military communities and stand ready to email, write, call or visit our nation’s lawmakers to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill.

Each year, VFW members from around the world gather in the nation’s capital for the VFW Legislative Conference. Since 1949, the conference has provided an opportunity for the organization’s leaders and activists to speak with policymakers of their respective states.

Due to VFW’s advocacy, spouses of deceased military troops will no longer have to pay the so-called “Widow’s Tax” starting in 2021. Prior to the new law, surviving spouses who receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) paid a dollar-for-dollar offset from their Military Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). For many survivors, the offset completely eliminated their SBP payments and threatened their financial security.

Through 2020, VFW also has worked to include more diseases to the VA’s Agent Orange conditions list. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine in recent years has published two studies linking Agent Orange exposure to bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson-like symptoms. VFW advocacy on the issue has led both chambers of Congress to add the conditions to the VA’s list through this year’s National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Another key part of VFW’s legislative efforts is its VFW-Student Veterans of America (SVA) Legislative Fellowship program. VFW collaborates with SVA to provide 10 student veterans a semester-long academic experience that involves research, action, reporting and advocating for veterans’ policies. One of those students was Katherine Cassell, who served in three different military services during her 18-year career.

Cassell enlisted in the Air Force in 1997 and was discharged in 2000. She also joined the Navy Reserve and served from 2003-06. She then joined the Army in 2006, where she served until her retirement. She deployed twice to Iraq with the Army’s 1st Combat Aviation Brigade in 2007-08 and 2010-11.

After her retirement from the military, Cassell started attending the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). Last year, she became a VFW National Veterans Service employee, working as a national pre-discharge claims representative at Joint Base Myer near Washington, D.C. (See p. 9 for more information about VFW’s National Veterans Service.)

Cassell, a life member of VFW Post 12101 in Henderson, Nev., said she learned about the VFW-SVA fellowship through other VFW members, who repeatedly urged her to apply. She was persuaded to do so last year and was selected as one of the student veterans to participate.

For her fellowship proposal, Cassell introduced a plan that would give veterans a resource to learn more about the benefits available for them and to ensure a successful transition.

“A resource like that should be open to all veterans,” Cassell said.
A Marine Corps veteran received a $1,500 grant from the VFW Unmet Needs program in 2015 after he and his family fell behind on the mortgage for his Lebanon, Ore., home.

Michael Aaron, who served in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars with 2nd Bn., 3rd Marines, said he had a “rough” transition after leaving the Marine Corps.

“I was struggling pretty bad,” said Aaron, a life member of VFW Post 584 in Albany, Ore. “Due to my service-connected PTSD, anxiety and depression, it had become a huge barrier for me to keep employment. I had tried criminal justice, firefighting and electrician school, but I just couldn’t keep it together.”

After leaving the Marine Corps in 2007, Aaron said he jumped from job to job. In 2015, Aaron said he had to quit working due to his service-connected mental health issues.

“I hit rock bottom,” Aaron said. “I went to get treatment at the American Lake VA Medical Center (in Tacoma, Wash.). I decided to do an inpatient residential program.”

During his six weeks at the VA, Aaron started talking with other veterans about VFW and its services to veterans and their families. He visited the VFW’s website and came across the Unmet Needs program.

“At the time, my house was going into foreclosure, we were behind on our car loan and my bills were piling up,” Aaron said. “Everything was tumbling down, and I just didn’t know where to go, so I applied for the Unmet Needs grant. It was the first time that I had reached out for any kind of financial help.”

Aaron said the Unmet Needs grant “meant the world” to him, and he was “in awe” that he didn’t have to pay any of the money back. “At that time, I vowed to give back to VFW in some way,” Aaron said. “The Unmet Needs grant was so important for my family’s well-being.”

Now serving as the commander of his Post, Aaron said he will continue to be a part of VFW in some capacity for the foreseeable future.

“I’m invested now,” Aaron said. “VFW is the kind of organization that would help someone like me, and I wanted to be a part of that. I felt that if VFW would do this for me, there has got to be more to it and a bigger picture to helping veterans.”

Aaron said he finally has found something he can do “all day, every day” with VFW.

“I mark the VFW’s help through the Unmet Needs program as a turning point in a very hard road for my family and me,” Aaron said. “I’m where I’m at today because of it.”

Michael Aaron, commander of VFW Post 584 in Albany, Ore., and Unmet Needs grant recipient is shown with his wife, Whitney, and children, Laura and Henry. Aaron said receiving the Unmet Needs grant was a “turning point” for him and his family, as it allowed them to stay in their home. Photo courtesy of Michael Aaron
When Traevonne Greene isn’t training with his Air National Guard unit, he is studying at Washburn University in Topeka, Kan., to attain double majors in business and computer science while minoring in music and theater.

Greene is able to work toward his educational goals with help from VFW’s Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship.

After graduating from Topeka High School, Greene joined the Air National Guard in May 2018.

“The main reason was so that I could go to college for free,” Greene said. “It was an experience to try and get away and travel — meet new people and learn about myself.”

Greene said that training for two days a month to go to college for free was a “no-brainer.”

Greene is an Airman 1st Class in the Kansas Air National Guard. He serves with the 190th Air Refueling Wing at Forbes Field Air National Guard Base in Topeka.

Last year, Greene traveled to Dodge City, Kan.; Garden City, Kan.; and Silver Lake, Kan., between April 16 and May 31, fulfilling assignments and duties with the Air National Guard.

“The good thing about being in the military is meeting people that are like-minded and are just good people,” Greene said.

As a health service management specialist in the Guard, Greene met fellow airman Heather Rice, who also happened to work at Sport Clips.

While on Guard duty together, Rice informed Greene of the Sport Clips Help a Hero Scholarship, which led him to search for more information about it.

“I would have never known about it if Heather would have never told me about it,” Greene said.

Greene plans to use the Help a Hero Scholarship to help pay for living expenses.

Despite double majoring in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) field and in business, Greene’s minor in music and theater is where his heart lies.

“I’m a pretty animated person, so I want to get into acting and modeling — entertainment,” Greene said.

Greene chose the STEM field of study because he knew jobs in these career fields are in high demand and also can sustain him while he starts his career in the entertainment business.

After college, he hopes to move to a bigger city, such as Atlanta, Los Angeles or New York, to increase his success in the entertainment industry.

Greene became interested in modeling and acting in 2016 while attending Paul Quinn College in Dallas.

After leaving Dallas, Greene found the closest modeling agency to his home. He signed with the agency a few months before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

By reapplying for the Help a Hero Scholarship, Greene will be able to work toward a career in modeling.

“I am just super thankful and blessed,” Greene said.
A VFW Post in Missouri hosted a “welcome home” celebration for one of its members returning from Afghanistan last year.

Members of Post 7356 in Parkville, Mo., surprised Army Reservist Brad Zollmann with the special celebration timed to coincide with its bi-weekly canteen night on June 12.

“It was really nice of the Post and Jessica to throw a homecoming party,” said Zollmann, who deployed to Afghanistan for nine months with the 329th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion out of Parsons, Kan. “I enjoyed getting to see everyone from the Post and catch up for the time I was gone.”

Organized by Post Commander Joe Wolfgeher and then-Junior Vice Commander Jessica Reyes, now Zollmann’s wife, the surprise party was comprised of food and drinks brought by its 35 or so Post members and family.

“I got a good bunch here at the Post, so it was really easy to get everyone involved to make it happen,” Wolfgeher said. “Overall, it was a fun and deserving night for one of our own.”

The Post often coordinates gatherings bi-weekly for canteen night, exhibiting a variety of themed events for its members.

“When I first came to the Post, everyone was very welcoming and made me feel like I belonged there,” Zollmann added. “Even now, after being a member for several years, I still always feel welcomed and at ease around all the members.”

While the VFW’s Military Assistance Program (MAP) grant was not used to fund Zollmann’s homecoming party, the organization often uses it to coordinate morale-building events for military units. More than 2.3 million service members and their families have been impacted by MAP-supported events since 2005.
COVID-19 WAS NO MATCH FOR THE EFFORTS OF VFW MEMBERS

VFW members across the country delved into the fray to help their respective communities during the COVID-19 pandemic this year.

Among the many VFW Departments and Posts involved during the global pandemic, the Department of Florida led the charge in its home state.

The Department partnered with the Brevard County Veterans Council and Florida Department of Emergency Management (FEMA) in Tallahassee, Fla.

In doing so, Florida’s VFW Emergency Response Team often transported masks, gloves, gowns, hats and shoe covers to first responders and hospitals across Florida.

Don Pearsall created the Department’s Emergency Response Team in 2018 after the destruction of Hurricane Michael, a Category 5 storm.

“It was chaos,” said Pearsall, who is currently the response team’s director, while also serving as chairman of the Brevard Veterans Council and coordinator for VFW’s Southern Conference Disaster Management team. “There needed to be better organization and prioritizing of relief supplies.”

Pearsall crafted a “centralized sort of triage” in order to distribute supplies over a period of months to those most in need.

“The quick-hit concept is simple,” Pearsall said. “There are five trained coordinators that cover Florida. When a natural disaster strikes, the coordinators travel to the affected areas to do an initial assessment as to what is needed first. The trailer and teams are already en route with basic human supplies and generators for veterans without power that need medical devices like oxygenators.”

The team’s most recent efforts included partnerships with restaurants in late April and May, which the Department expects to keep intact after the crisis.

In Casa Grande, Ariz., Post 1677 opened a food bank in March to provide food and water twice a week for the elderly, homeless and patients at a local VA cancer treatment center.

In just a couple of months, the Post had raised $29,000 and delivered more than 6,000 care packages, while hosting a free drive-thru breakfast special on Wednesdays and Saturdays for anyone in need of a meal.

“Our Post has been very engaged with the community in helping them through this crisis,” Post Commander Hugues Byrne said at the time. “We’ve got a very energized Post and Auxiliary, and all hands are on deck to help where we can.”

Arizona’s District 7 Commander James McCormick, right, helps VFW and Auxiliary members unload goods for those in need during the COVID-19 crisis in April 2020. Post 1677 in Casa Grande, Ariz., opened a food bank in late March to safely provide food and water twice a week for the elderly, homeless and 19 patients at a local VA cancer treatment center.
VFW has long been known for its tremendous aid following natural disasters. From floods and wildfires to typhoons and hurricanes, VFW stands ready to help.

When an EF-3-rated tornado devastated the Nashville, Tenn., area, and killed at least 25 people in the early morning hours of March 3, 2020, VFW Post 1970 in West Nashville immediately started disaster relief efforts.

“We got the word out to receive donations on social media and by contacting Nashville media outlets,” Post 1970 Commander John Lambert said. “We received many donations. Most of them came from people who said they heard about our efforts from the TV and radio stations.”

Lambert, who served aboard the USS Philippine Sea (CG-58) as a fire controlman, said his Post was able to “quickly organize” because of social media.

“I would say that the best way to communicate information to the public during a disaster is through social media,” he said. “It’s a media source that you can control and people can spread the word for you. It’s the easiest way to quickly get the word out to a large amount of people.”

Because of this, Lambert said the Post received many donations from local residents and businesses during the relief efforts. Among the items received included:

- 12,096 bottles of water.
- About 1,000 pounds of non-perishable and dry food.
- 25 medium boxes’ worth of hygiene products.

“We heard from the community that the biggest need was water,” Lambert said. “We...
were happy to be able to help out with that.”

Members of Post 1970 also decided to provide meals at the Post to the victims affected by the tornado. Through the week, Post members and other volunteers visited affected areas to help clear properties of fallen trees and debris.

Lambert said there were about 25 volunteers from the VFW Department of Tennessee; the Department’s Districts 6 and 7; Post 6022 in Tuscaloosa, Ala.; and other organizations.

Donnie Nelson, commander of Post 6022, said that when he learned about the Nashville tornado, he wanted to help with any VFW-led relief efforts.

“I contacted the Department of Tennessee in Nashville to get in contact with someone in the damaged area,” Nelson said. “They gave me John Lambert’s number and he advised me of what they needed.”

Nelson said he and Post 6022 Junior Vice Commander David Jemison traveled from Alabama to Tennessee to assist with Post 1970’s efforts. Nelson also said he was able to bring a U-Haul trailer full of supplies and donations taken from their Post members and community.

“Our mission at VFW is to help veterans, and that is what we strive to do,” Nelson said. “As veterans, it helps us to continue to serve.”

VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II meets with members of VFW Post 2130 in Lake Charles, La., in September 2020. Roesch visited the VFW Post near New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Laura, which caused at least 26 deaths and about $1.4 billion in damages in Louisiana according to the Associated Press. While in Louisiana, Roesch awarded two deputies of the St. Charles Parish Sheriff’s Office the VFW Life Saving Award. In June 2020, sheriff’s deputies Alexis Agnelly and Paul Quick saved the life of a man who almost drowned in the Mississippi River near St. Rose, about 20 miles east of New Orleans.

Photo by Terrence Hayes/VFW
Then a senior at Marian High School in Omaha, Neb., Shruthi Kumar, explained “What Makes America Great” in an essay that earned her first place in VFW’s 2019-2020 Voice of Democracy contest.

Kumar’s essay, which begins, “In America we’ve been numb to noticing the greatness of America, a sense that we’ve too easily adapted to,” carries a steady reminder that “we must focus not on the negativity that plagues the headlines, but on the existing revolutionaries of the modern world that call America home.” Americans such as Warren Buffet, Itihaj Muhammad and Emma Gonzalez were highlighted in Kumar’s speech. “These are Americans. Fearless pioneers, brave leaders and humble workers,” she wrote.

Kumar noted the importance of the Pledge of Allegiance, which she learned as a kindergartener. She wrote that “each heart that enters an American school is shaped to be a patriotic one.”

Kumar, now a freshman at Harvard University majoring in psychology and public policy concluded her speech with: “We must draw from the patriotic fervor in our hearts to not only see but to notice the greatness that is America.”

Sponsored by VFW Post 1581 in Omaha, Neb., Kumar won the T.C. Selman Memorial Scholarship, a $30,000 college scholarship, for her essay. She read aloud her essay during the Parade of Winners ceremony at the 2020 VFW Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., in March.

Patriot’s Pen, an essay competition open to students in grades 6-8, encourages young minds to examine America’s history and modern society. More than 165,400 students competed in the 2019-2020 Patriot’s Pen youth essay contest. The competition spanned the U.S. as well as the Pacific areas, Europe and the Panama Canal. The Patriot’s Pen winners shared the $64,000 purse, distributed accordingly to each of the winners. This year’s top prize of $5,000 went to Ruby Howe, a seventh grader from Rochester Hills, Mich. Howe was sponsored by VFW Post 334 and its Auxiliary in Lake Orion, Mich.
VFW sponsors the annual Smart/Maher National Citizenship Education Teacher Award, providing one winner from three school levels (elementary, middle and high school) with an all-expenses-paid trip to VFW’s national convention. Because this year’s VFW national convention was canceled, the 2020 winners will be recognized alongside next year’s awardees at the national convention in Baltimore. In 2020, however, more than 1,500 teachers were nominated. Sixty awards have been presented annually since the program began in 1999.

Megan Joy Rodgers, a fourth-grade teacher at Brookfield Elementary School in Brookfield, Ohio, coordinates a school-wide “Wall of Honor” to commemorate veterans, inviting students and staff to submit photographs of family or friends who served or continue to serve as active-duty military. The “Wall of Honor” gets displayed each year in the school’s cafeteria.

Meg Joy Rodgers, Grade Level K-5, Brookfield Elementary School, Ohio

Michael Russell has been an eighth-grade science teacher for 21 years at Bridgewater-Raritan Middle School in Bridgewater, N.J., where he’s led the Veterans History Club for 12 years. Sponsored by VFW Post 370 in Highland Park, N.J., Russell often welcomes veterans to speak to students about their military experiences. He’s even interviewed veterans for the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

Michael Russell, Grade Level 6-8, Bridgewater-Raritan Middle School, Bridgewater, N.J.

Matthew J. Bundy is an Air Force veteran, a current city council member in Mountain Home, Idaho, and a teacher at Mountain Home High School. Sponsored by VFW Post 5423 at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Bundy, who served from 1984-2004, has held many classroom events. The majority of those events have introduced students to congressional candidates, state senators and representatives and the town’s political leaders.

Matthew J. Bundy, Grade Level 9-12, Mountain Home High School, Mountain Home, Idaho

$2.1 Million: Amount of awards presented at all levels of VFW during the 2019-20 Voice of Democracy competition.

$1.4 Million: Amount of awards presented at all levels of VFW during the 2019-20 Patriot’s Pen competition.

165,450: Number of Patriot’s Pen student participants in 2019-20.

64,466: Number of Voice of Democracy student participants in 2019-20.

$214,780: Amount of awards distributed at the Post, District and Department levels for the Smart/Maher award.

5,846: Number of teachers who participated in the 2020 Smart/Maher National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year contest.

60: Number of teachers who have been honored since 1999.
It’s no secret that veterans have a penchant for community service. To bring attention to and honor the continued commitment of such service, VFW launched the #StillServing campaign in February.

In fact, a 2018 Volunteering in America Report by the Corporation for National and Community Service found veterans volunteer 25 percent more often, are 17 percent more likely to make a monetary donation and are 30 percent more likely to participate in local organizations than civilians who never served in the military.

“This awareness campaign showcases how veterans continue a life of service and how their ongoing contributions are positively impacting our society,” VFW Adjutant General Kevin Jones said. “We are doing this to recognize and show respect for veterans’ service from active duty and beyond.”

Using the hashtag #StillServing, veterans are encouraged to share their stories of continued service on social media.

VFW urges all to visit vfw.org/StillServing to learn more about the campaign, make a shareable image honoring veterans in their lives, watch videos of VFW members making a difference and see a collection of user-generated content.

Throughout the week of July 20-24, VFW hosted a weeklong #StillServing Celebration on VFW’s Facebook page showcasing stories of veterans who have remained committed to a life of service, and especially those who’ve stepped up in the wake of COVID-19.

During that time, members and Post leaders discussed how they’ve met the many challenges during these uncertain times. Remarks from special guests and celebrity entertainers also were featured.

Celebrities included Darryl “DMC” McDaniels of Run DMC. McDaniels has been active in the field of mental health, advocating for therapy as a way to overcome personal obstacles.

“Now is the time to capitalize on positive progress and turn the spotlight to our members and the many ways veterans are continuing to serve and make their communities better,” Jones said.

Valerie Lavin of St. Petersburg, Fla., is one example of VFW #StillServing. Retiring after more than 21 years in the Army, Lavin founded Veterans 2 Corporate (V2C) to help bridge the gap between the military and civilian worlds. This inspired her to co-found Action Zone, a nonprofit that provides entrepreneurship education to veterans and military spouse entrepreneurs. Today, Lavin is CEO of her company Luminary Global, which provides superior pre-hospital products and emergency preparedness supplies to military, first responders and citizens who are the lifeline between preventable death and hospital care. VFW file photo.
Since 2003, Wounded Warrior Project continues to transform the way America honors and empowers injured veterans in our communities. Over the past four years, WWP has proudly provided more than $2.2 million in grants to support VFW’s on-base service officer program.

Humana has had a long-standing relationship with the military and is committed to the well-being of veterans. Humana sponsors several large events across the country to support veterans and contributed $150,000 to Unmet Needs, along with an additional $175,000 to support National Veterans Service and other VFW programs. In 2018, Humana and VFW launched a Uniting to Combat Hunger initiative to help the 1 out of 4 veteran families that are food insecure. In 2020, the campaign raised the equivalent of more than 1 million meals for veterans and military families.

Since 2013, Sport Clips has been the primary supporter of the VFW’s Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship program, which provides scholarships for service members and veterans for use at post-secondary and trade schools. To date, they have awarded more than 1,750 scholarships totaling $8 million. In 2019, through the generous donations from their clients and partners, VFW received $1.25 million for the program.

Since July 2015, Twisted X has supported the VFW National Convention and by selling their comfortable handcrafted footwear on the VFW online store. Prasad Reddy, President and CEO, has a deep, longstanding connection to VFW. “When I became a citizen in 1980,” Reddy said, “after I took the oath as a citizen with the judge, I stepped out of the court hall and was greeted by VFW members who welcomed me to America as a citizen and gave me an American flag and the Constitution booklet.” It’s with this passion for patriotism that Twisted X increased its pledge of support by sponsoring the 2020 and 2021 Voice of Democracy educational experience in Washington, D.C., including an additional $60,000 to support the Unmet Needs program.

USAA is well-known for its legendary commitment to its members, providing insurance, banking, investment and retirement products and advice to more than 13 million current and former U.S. service members and their families. USAA leads the way in its financial commitment to support VFW programs and membership.

Since 2007, participating Burger King franchisees have held an annual fundraiser in July or November to benefit the VFW’s Unmet Needs program. Encouraging their patrons to donate $1 or more with their meal purchase has resulted in more than $6.3 million raised to support more than 10,000 veterans and military families.

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BURGER KING
TOP FRANCHISEE DONORS FOR UNMET NEEDS
Quality Dining, Inc.
Mastoran Corporation
Family Dining, Inc.
Delton Restaurants, Inc.
Supreme Foods
Laird Management LLC
Drury Restaurants
Glencoe Management
SEP, Inc.
Valley King of WI

SPORT CLIPS
HELP A HERO TOP DONORS
Sally Beauty Holdings, Inc. & Subs.
John Paul Mitchell Systems
SCI, Inc.
PVG003-Harrisburg LLC
TMAC Investments, Inc.
Sawyer Business Group, Inc.
NC Sport Cuts LLC
Lee Hill Investments LLC
Devine Clips LLC
Henkel

Humana employees volunteering during the pandemic to help deliver healthy snack kits to those in need.

Then-Jr. Vice Commander-in-Chief Fritz Mihelcic with his service dog, Mama, then-Sr. Vice Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch, Post 56 Commander Allen Barnes and his wife, Danielle, and VFW Director of Programs Lynn Rolf with a check for VFW’s Unmet Needs program in December at a Jackyl concert in Kansas City Mo. Jackyl lead singer, Jesse James Dupree, donated merchandise all year to VFW Posts near their shows to raise money nationwide for Unmet Needs.

Photo by Kevin Jamison

VFW Post 1336 life member Vernon “Pete” Dolan presents an award to Whitmore Ace Hardware Manager Nicole McDaniel, Assistant Manager Felicity Duran-Yeates and owner Mike Cripe. Whitmore Ace Hardware in Coal City, Ill., provided 288 U.S. flags to Post 1336 to be placed on veterans graves at Braceville Gardner Cemetery. Coal City High School students were responsible for flag placement.

Dolan also is employed at Whitmore Ace Hardware.

Photo by Charlie Brown, commander, St. Javin Post 1336
In the first half of 2020 alone, the VFW Unmet Needs program helped over 270 veterans and military families from becoming homeless, going hungry or going without basic necessities during times of service members’ deployment or transition to the civilian workforce. The Unmet Needs program has awarded more than $11.9 million in assistance to more than 10,800 service members, veterans and their families to prevent dire circumstances since 2004.

“You’ll never know what this grant meant to me and my family.” - Unmet Needs grant recipient Johnie Wasley

For more information, check out vfw.org/SurgeToSupport or contact Foundation@vfw.org.

#STILLSERVING CELEBRATION

During the week of July 20-24, 2020 the #StillServing Celebration was a weeklong celebration on the VFW’s Facebook page that showcased stories of veterans who’ve remained committed to a life of service and especially those who’ve stepped up in the wake of COVID-19.
The VFW Foundation wishes to express its gratitude to some of its most magnanimous donors. Such generosity helped fund numerous programs and initiatives from September 1, 2018 through August 31, 2019.
We extend a special “thank you” to the following donors whose generosity and commitment to veterans deserves special recognition. Their lifetime contributions have been instrumental in ensuring that our life-changing programs are able to assist those who have served and sacrificed.
## Financial Statements

### Statement of Financial Position
**August 31, 2020**

#### ASSETS
- Cash and cash equivalents: $17,559,524
- Investments: 201,414,168
- Investments made with cash collateral received from securities on loan: 23,631,327
- Receivables: 4,452,532
- Inventory: 1,887,773
- Property and equipment, net: 9,145,989
- Postretirement asset: 1,522,451
- Prepaid expenses: 2,661,869

**TOTAL ASSETS**: $262,275,633

#### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS
- Accounts payable and accrued liabilities: 8,846,110
- Payable for collateral received for securities on loan: 23,631,327
- Pension liability: 8,086,741
- Life member dues for future distribution — state and posts: 77,485,370
- Deferred revenue: 32,999,008

**Total liabilities**: 151,048,556

**Net assets**: 111,227,077

**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS**: $262,275,633

### Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets
**Year Ended August 31, 2020**

#### SUPPORT AND REVENUE
- Contributions and gifts: $72,334,076
- Membership dues: 8,055,488
- Investment return, net: 8,848,648
- Supply, Buddy Poppy and other sales: 5,214,396
- Advertising revenue: 3,351,012
- Other revenue: 3,960,076

**Total support and revenue**: 101,763,696

#### EXPENSES
**Program Services**:
- Veterans service activities: 26,982,560
- Fraternal activities and member services: 17,140,625
- Community service and public awareness: 11,950,153
- Total program services: 56,073,338

**Supporting Services**:
- Fundraising activities: 29,619,097
- Management and general: 4,530,786
- Membership maintenance and promotion: 1,821,432
- Total supporting services: 35,971,315

**Total expenses**: 92,044,653

**Change in net assets before pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost**: 9,719,043

**Pension-related changes other than net periodic pension cost**: 2,474,912

**Change in net assets**: 12,193,955

**NET ASSETS, Beginning of period**: 99,033,122

**NET ASSETS, END OF PERIOD**: $111,227,077
### Statement of Financial Position
**August 31, 2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
<td>$2,615,407</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investments</td>
<td>14,046,643</td>
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<td>Receivables</td>
<td>27,718</td>
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<tr>
<td>Furniture, fixtures, and equipment, net</td>
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<td>Prepaid expenses</td>
<td>130,403</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>$16,881,793</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable and accrued liabilities</td>
<td>$443,230</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total liabilities</strong></td>
<td>443,230</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net assets</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without donor restrictions</td>
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<tr>
<td>With donor restrictions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total net assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,438,563</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>$16,881,793</strong></td>
</tr>
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### Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets
**Year Ended August 31, 2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash contributions and gifts</td>
<td>$9,231,376</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment return, net</td>
<td>1,494,272</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total support and revenue</strong></td>
<td>10,725,648</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| EXPENSES                                         |         |
| Program Services:                                |         |
| Veterans service activities                       | 2,675,808|
| Community service and public awareness           | 532,062 |
| Supporting Services:                             |         |
| Fundraising activities                            | 426,805 |
| Management and general                           | 489,156 |
| **Total expenses**                               | 4,123,831|

| Change in net assets                             | 6,601,817|
| **NET ASSETS, Beginning of period**              | 9,836,746|
| **NET ASSETS, END OF PERIOD**                    | **$16,438,563** |
Preserving the memory of America’s war dead is a never-ending VFW duty. Over the last 40 years, VFW members have contributed more than $7.2 million to eight major memorial efforts in Washington, D.C.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Persian Gulf War. The leadership of the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association is confident that this is the year they will celebrate the groundbreaking of the long-awaited memorial.

According to Scott Stump, president of the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association, the memorial will be located at the corner of Constitution Avenue and 23rd Street.

Stump credited VFW for getting things started with its $500,000 pledge in 2015. While the money was “very much appreciated,” Stump said it was the timing of the announcement that was phenomenal.

“A lot of people didn’t want to share the risk,” he added. “VFW stepped up when nobody else would at that level. VFW’s donation has been critical to the success of where we are today.”

Stump noted that in addition to VFW donating at the national level, its Posts have also stepped up in big ways. He specifically mentioned Post 7564 in West Fargo, N.D., which has contributed $30,000 alone.

VFW paid the $500,000 donation in installments of $100,000 over five years (2015-19).

Stump, a life member of VFW Post 748 in Knox, Ind., said there are four aspects to the memorial:

- Telling the story of what happened during the war;
- Identifying each of the 34 coalition countries that united with the United States to liberate Kuwait;
- Reflecting the unique environmental and battle conditions servicemen and women experienced; and
- Leaving visitors with an enduring memory of the historical significance and accomplishments of Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

Stump said that while some still cite the war as nothing more than 100 hours on the ground, it was so much more. He noted how the public perception of the military took a pivotal turn during Desert Storm. The memorial will convey this sentiment.

“This is going to be so unique,” Stump said. “It was so much more than a 100-hour war. And at the end of the day, people will remember those who served and learn this story.”

An artist rendering of the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield War Memorial shows the circular design, which will nudge visitors in a “left hook” walking pattern. Organizers hope to begin construction on the memorial in 2021 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Persian Gulf War.
VFW’s National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo., contains its administrative hub. Some 143 employees work here, including the Adjutant General and Quartermaster General staff, and VFW Foundation. It also leases space to the VFW Auxiliary and to area businesses.

VFW’s office in the nation’s capital oversees 74 employees at more than two dozen locations within the District of Columbia and major military installations around the country. National Veterans Service and National Legislative Service are located here.