

CHECKPOINT



Last Printed Issue!
Watch for the September/October online issue at:
www.vfw.org/news-and-publications/Checkpoint

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A 'First of its Kind' in Rochester

New York Post Gives \$10,000 for Female Veterans Apartments

Domonique Smith is the first woman to live in the first housing unit for female veterans in the Rochester, N.Y., area – a facility that a local VFW Post contributed to.

Smith was living with her mother when her brother told her about the housing opportunity.

"It's a blessing to be able to have something like this come along, especially at the time I needed it," said Smith, who served from 2010-14 and was in Bahrain for two years with Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron 3- Detachment Bahrain.

Post 8495 in Fairport, N.Y., donated \$10,000 to help furnish the house, which holds two apartment units. Post Commander Victor Wahlberg, who served in the Air Force during Vietnam with the 50th Tactical Airlift Squadron as a pilot, said past Post Commander LeRoy LaRose suggested the Post donate to the project.

The Post, according to Wahlberg, holds a golf tournament every year and donates the proceeds to a different cause. Last year's tournament was to benefit homeless veterans.

"It seemed like a perfect fit," Wahlberg said.

The Post's Auxiliary also donated roughly \$1,100 in furniture for the apartments.

Matthew McGee, assistant to the executive director/marketing coordinator for the outreach center, said it wasn't until February that the ribbon-cutting ceremony occurred for Priscilla's House, the Veterans Outreach Center (VOC) home for female veterans that includes two fully furnished apartments intended for longer-term living situations. The VOC opened in 1973.

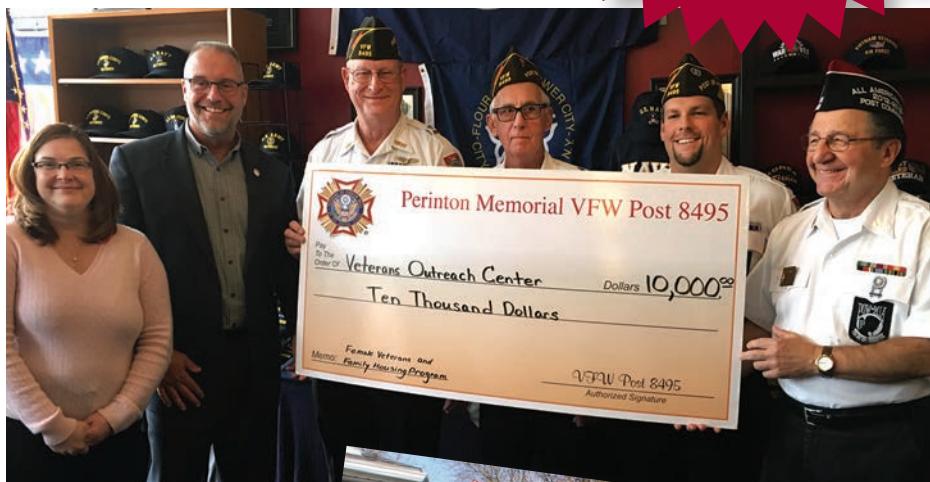
"It's the first female veteran house of its kind in the area," McGee said.

Women are able to reside at the house for up to two years, and their children up to 16 years old also are allowed. Smith lives at the house with her three-year-old son, Nico.

Tenants have to be a VOC client in some capacity, according to McGee.

The concept of the house itself came to "fruition from a generous donor," according to McGee. An anonymous donor contributed \$25,000, while VOC Board Member Priscilla Imburgia, the home's namesake, gave \$25,000. Along with other donations, McGee said, the total fundraising effort netted about \$325,000.

Email: kwilliams@vfw.org



Missy Johnson, of Post 8495 Auxiliary, then-Executive Director Todd Baxter, VFW Post 8495 members Victor Wahlberg, Eric Warner, Mike Cialini and Pat Cammilleri present a \$10,000 check to the Veterans Outreach Center in October at the VOC's Stars and Stripes Flag Store.

Right: Domonique Smith (center) and her son, Nico, attend the ribbon cutting for Priscilla's House. Smith is the first woman to live in one of two apartments that the Veterans Outreach Center provides in the house.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MATTHEW MCGEE



Left: Guests attend the February ribbon cutting for Priscilla's House. The all-female housing unit is the first of its kind in the Rochester, N.Y., area and is part of the Rochester Veterans Outreach Center.
PHOTO COURTESY OF MATTHEW MCGEE



YOUTH ESSAY THEMES ANNOUNCED

The 2017-18 Voice of Democracy theme is: "American History: Our Hope for the Future."

The Patriot's Pen theme is: "America's Gift to my Generation."

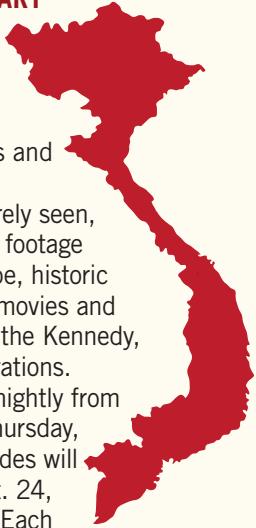
To download and print the student entry forms for Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen, visit www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/youth-scholarships.

PBS TO PREMIERE VIETNAM WAR DOCUMENTARY

After 10 years in the making, PBS will broadcast *The Vietnam War*, a 10-part, 18-hour documentary film series directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick.

The series will include rarely seen, digitally re-mastered archival footage from sources around the globe, historic television broadcasts, home movies and audio recordings from inside the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations.

The Vietnam War will air nightly from Sunday, Sept. 17, through Thursday, Sept. 21. The final five episodes will air nightly from Sunday, Sept. 24, through Thursday, Sept. 28. Each episode will air at 8 p.m. ET with a repeat broadcast immediately following the premiere.



SIGN YOUR NAME, CHANGE YOUR FUTURE

VFW members frequently tell us, "I wish I could do more." Learn about ways you can have an impact for future generations of veterans, just by signing your name — all it takes is a few words in your will. Call the VFW Planned Giving Office at (816) 968-1119, email plannedgiving@vfw.org or visit www.vfw.org/plannedgiving.

SHOP AND SHOW YOUR VFW PRIDE

Spark a conversation when you wear VFW-branded apparel. One of the most effective and visible ways to show your pride in the VFW, and raise awareness of VFW programs, is to purchase branded merchandise from the VFW Store. When you purchase items through the VFW Store, you know that your money stays in the VFW family and is used to assist veterans, military service members and their families. To see what's new, go online to www.vfwstore.org and click "Look What's New" or call 1-800-821-2606.



ENSURE VACATION GOES SMOOTHLY WITH A TRAVEL PLAN

You can plan your vacation itinerary with the utmost care, but an emergency can derail even the most well-traveled among us. Consider purchasing a travel plan that will assist you in the event of an emergency situation. Be covered for emergency medical evacuation, return-home transportation costs for you and your traveling companions and even help with lost or stolen travel documents.

For more information regarding this plan, call the VFW Member Benefits Department at 1-800-821-2606, option 1.



Bob Wallace, Adjutant General

Unified and Strong, VFW is Moving Forward

VFW has a bright future ahead. Our influence in Washington is phenomenal, we've made fundamental improvements in how we do business and we have a new commitment to a united message.

Over the past year, VFW employees have testified on Capitol Hill more than 20 times. Our collective voice represents our members beliefs and it speaks loudly on Capitol Hill. When we talk to lawmakers about sequestration and its negative effects on the military and active-duty troops, lawmakers and other government officials listen to us because they know we are constantly attuned to the military.

Likewise, the young men and women in uniform see our service officers at the nearly two dozen Benefits Delivery at Discharge sites on military installations around the country. They find out that we not only help them with VA claims or answer important questions, but that we'll fight for them going forward.

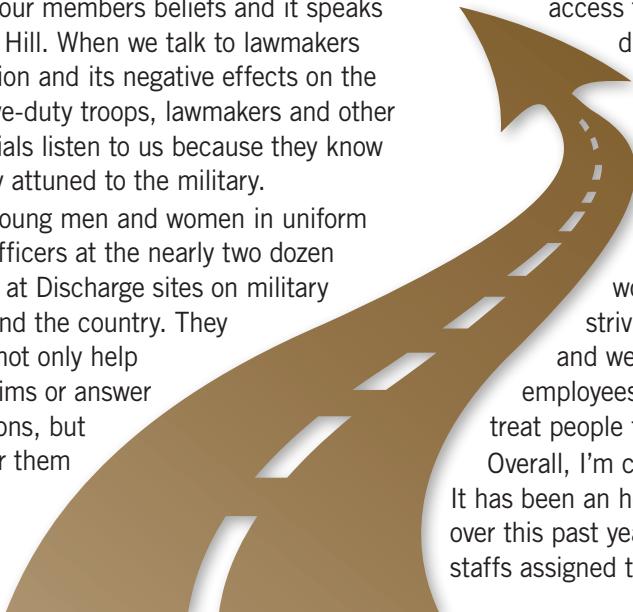
We also understand how veterans think. For

example, we've surveyed our members six times since the VA access-to-care crisis erupted in 2014. This has given us an up-to-date and accurate portrayal of what our members like and don't like about VA health care.

We are working with the new VA Secretary David Shulkin to guarantee the department provides timely access to health care, accurate and expedient decisions on claims and top-notch customer service.

In Kansas City at VFW's National Headquarters, we're moving ahead as well. We've instituted a new philosophy, "One voice, one vision, one VFW," and all of our departments are working toward the same goal. We're striving for better internal communication, and we're encouraging more feedback from employees. It's just common sense that if you treat people fairly, morale improves.

Overall, I'm confident VFW's best days are ahead. It has been an honor to serve as your Adjutant General over this past year and to work with the professional staffs assigned to Kansas City and Washington, D.C.



Debra Anderson, Quartermaster General

Three Keys for Effective Leaders

Many of you are starting in a new leadership position. It might be helpful to reflect on what it means to be a leader and how you can best fulfill your responsibilities to VFW and your fellow members.

One of the characteristics that sets the U.S. military apart from others is the ability of service members at every level to take the initiative and make decisions. This is achieved through a combination of training, trust and understanding of the commander's intent.

Training is important because if you ask somebody to do a job, you need to provide them training and resources on the specific task or program. This might seem obvious, but in addition to our schools of instruction, one-on-one mentoring is key. Also, remember that VFW's website has a wealth of tools behind the member login that can be used to train new Post officers or committee chairs.

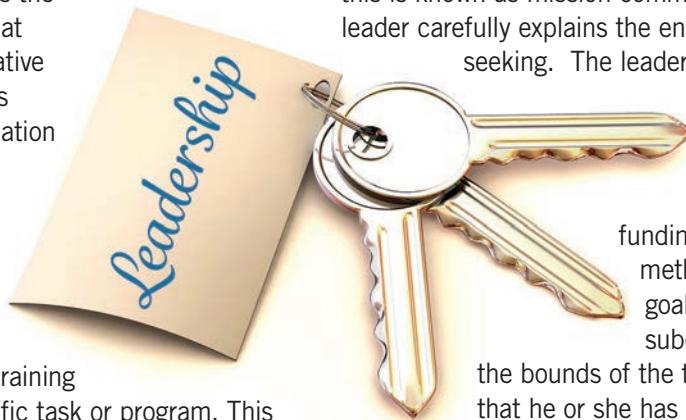
Trust is important because a commander can't be everywhere, doing everything personally. You need to give subordinate leaders the training and the tools and let them execute the program in their own way. You

need to trust them, and they need to trust you. You do this by demonstrating integrity, being truthful to your word and respecting others.

The third piece is understanding and articulating your Post commander's intent. In today's military, this is known as mission command. This means the leader carefully explains the end result he or she is seeking. The leader clearly states what he

or she wants, why it's important and also identifies any constraints, such as funding or deadlines. The method of achieving the goal is left to the subordinate leader within the bounds of the training and guidelines that he or she has received.

In today's fast-paced environment, leaders must create an atmosphere in which subordinates have the autonomy to take action. People are more engaged in their work when they have control over it. They are self-governed and have freedom to make decisions and take action. You can only do this if you first have training and trust. All three can work powerfully together to make you a better leader and propel your organization to success.



CHECKPOINT

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Checkpoint is an award-winning newsletter published six times a year in January, March, May, July, September and November. Its purpose is to provide VFW Department, District and Post leaders with information to enhance their job performance and furnish them with a more comprehensive understanding of the organization.

Correspondence can be sent to the editor at VFW National Headquarters.

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VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

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SERVICE OFFICERS

Works Hundreds of Claims Annually

Wisconsin Service Officer Helps 1,900 Veterans in His County

Randy Bjerke has been a service officer for nine years and says the most rewarding part of being a service officer is helping veterans.

“When we are successful on a claim that makes a huge impact on a veteran’s life, I’m gratified,” Bjerke said. “We work at being able to get the proper benefit where it belongs and to help veterans and spouses get what they have coming to them.”

Bjerke, a member of Post 1959 in Black River Falls, Wis., retired from the Marine Corps in 1994 as a gunnery sergeant. He said he joined out of Black River Falls, Wis., and was a Marine bandsman who played trumpet during his first enlistment at Marine Corps Air Station El Toro and the Marine Barracks at Naval Station Pearl Harbor. He later became an avionics technician, and then was a recruiter in his home state of Wisconsin.

“Being a recruiter really helped me with being a service officer for VFW,” Bjerke said, adding that learning how to work in an office environment and talk to people were some of the skills he gained as a recruiter.

“When we are successful on a claim that makes a huge impact on a veteran’s life, I’m gratified.”

— Service Officer Randy Bjerke

After retiring in 1994, Bjerke became a VFW member, then became a life member the following year. Bjerke is very involved with the Post and works with a part-time staff assistant, Vanessa Eddy, to help Jackson County veterans. Bjerke said they help with 100 to 200 claims each year and that they are motivated to help the 1,900 veterans of the county.

“It’s a lot like our old VFW motto: Honor the dead by helping the living,”

Bjerke said. “By the time you get into a staff NCO position in the Marine Corps, you’re looking out for your people. Now, the entire veteran community of Jackson County (Wis.) are my people. It’s my job to help them out and do what I can for them.”

Bjerke, 61, said he mostly works with veterans on claims for disability compensation and pensions.

“I also work with spouses on death pensions,” he said. “It seems as if I always have something I’m helping with.”

Bjerke said his biggest monetary compensation wins came from an Agent Orange affected Vietnam War veteran and the spouse of a disabled Vietnam War veteran.

“When the VA added more conditions to the Agent Orange listing, the “Nehmer decision” (a 1986 class-action lawsuit against the VA) said any time they add more conditions to the presumptive listing, the VA has to go back and look for prior claims to see if any had been denied,” Bjerke said. “We did a claim for a guy who had filed for heart problems caused by Agent Orange back in the ’90s, and he was given about \$250,000 in back pay.”

Bjerke said he helped the widow of a Vietnam War veteran with a VA

compensation claim.

“The veteran had passed away from a service-connected disability, but the VA didn’t see it that way,” Bjerke said. “We went through appeal after appeal for the claim, and four years later, we got the response back that we were successful in the spouse’s claim to get her dependency and indemnity compensation from her husband’s disability.”

Bjerke’s advice for new service officers is to receive training and reach out for help as much as possible.

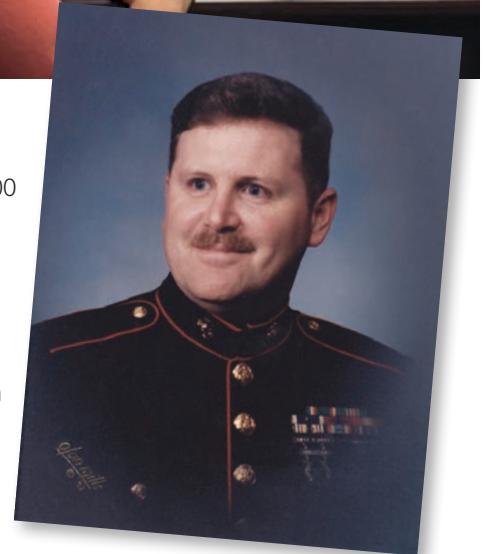
Email: dspiva@vfw.org



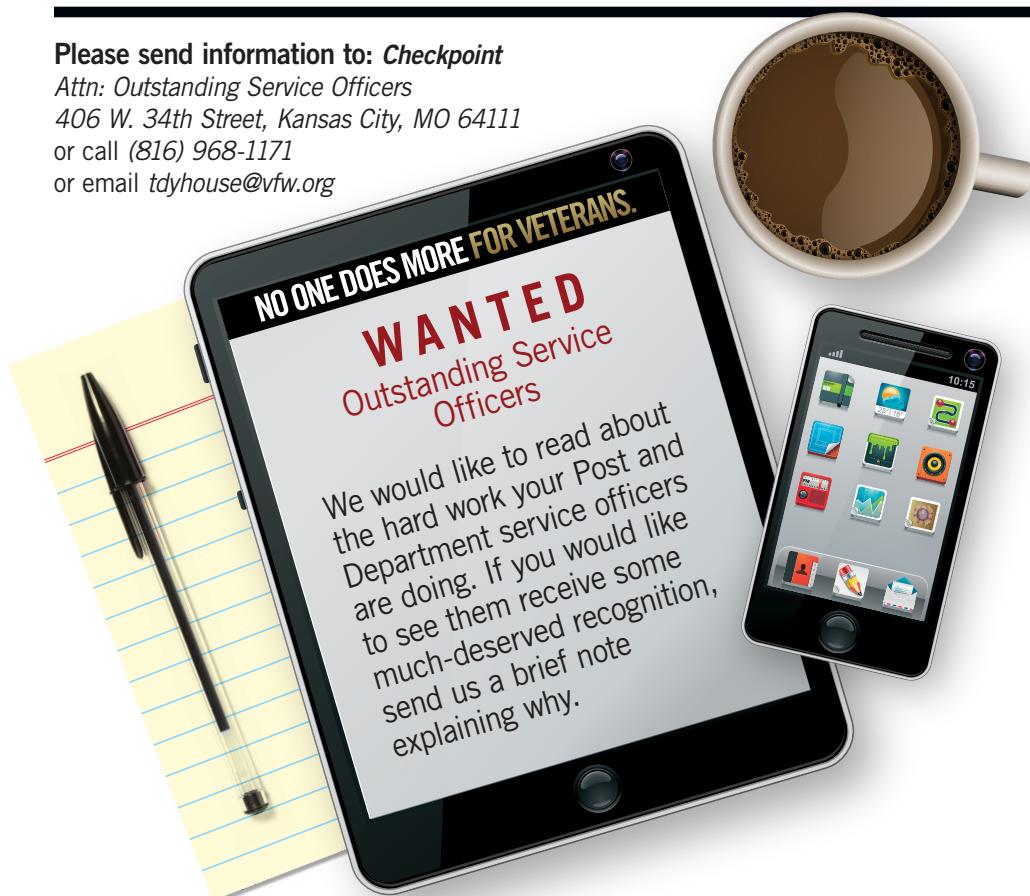
Service Officer Randy Bjerke assists with a VA claim at Post 1959 in Black River Falls, Wis. Bjerke has been a service officer for nine years and serves the 1,900 veterans of Jackson County (Wis.).

Retired Gunnery Sgt. Randy Bjerke served 20 years in the Marine Corps. He enlisted as a trumpet player as a Marine bandsman out of Black River Falls, Wis. Later in his military career, Bjerke was an avionics technician and recruiter.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RANDY BJERKE



Please send information to: **Checkpoint**
Attn: Outstanding Service Officers
406 W. 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111
or call (816) 968-1171
or email tdyhouse@vfw.org



NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE

Do you need help filing a claim?

VFW’s National Veterans Service has a VFW Department service officer locator on its website. To find a service officer near you, just follow these easy steps:

1. Visit www.vfw.org/nvs.
2. Select “ASSISTANCE” from the menu.
3. Select “NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE” from the pull-down menu.
4. Locate the “FIND A SERVICE OFFICER” box on the right-hand side of the screen.
5. Select your state and hit “GO”.

FIND A SERVICE OFFICER

State

GO >>



2017 DEPARTMENT HOTEL ASSIGNMENTS

1. Hilton Riverside

- New Jersey
- Kansas
- Nevada
- North Dakota
- Oregon
- Pacific Areas
- Utah
- Washington
- Wyoming
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Europe
- Maine
- Massachusetts
- New Hampshire
- New York
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- Vermont

2. New Orleans Marriott (Auxiliary Hqt)

- Illinois
- Virginia
- Maryland
- South Carolina
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Nebraska
- South Dakota
- Wisconsin
- Alaska
- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Montana

3. Sheraton New Orleans (VFW Hqt)

- Kentucky
- Ohio
- New Mexico
- Missouri
- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Florida
- Georgia
- Louisiana
- Mississippi
- North Carolina
- Oklahoma
- Tennessee
- Texas
- West Virginia
- Unaffiliated Posts



1 Hilton New Orleans Riverside
2 Poydras Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
(504) 561-0500

2 New Orleans Marriott
555 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
(504) 581-1000

3 Sheraton New Orleans Hotel
500 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
(504) 525-2500

★ New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center
900 Convention Center Blvd.
New Orleans, LA 70130
(504) 582-3023

4 The Westin New Orleans Canal Place
100 Iberville Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
(504) 566-7006

480-Page Book

'Brutal Battles of Vietnam' Available for Purchase at Convention

The long-awaited *Brutal Battles of Vietnam: America's Deadliest Days 1965-1972* is now on sale. The VFW Store is selling the book for **\$29.95 plus shipping and handling.**

To avoid shipping costs, stop by booth 901 at the VFW National Convention and purchase a copy of this 480-page comprehensive battle history, edited by former VFW magazine Editor-in-Chief Richard Kolb and designed by former VFW magazine Art Director Robert Widener.

Brimming with compelling stories, the book focuses exclusively on the perspective of the fighting man. Virtually all of the deadliest engagements are covered and it includes 700 pictures, many rarely seen before, covering some 100 military actions.

Easy-to-read chapters convey the essence of combat through swift-moving vignettes. Stirring first-person accounts reveal the raw emotions of the men at the tip of the spear. You will learn about far too often forgotten.

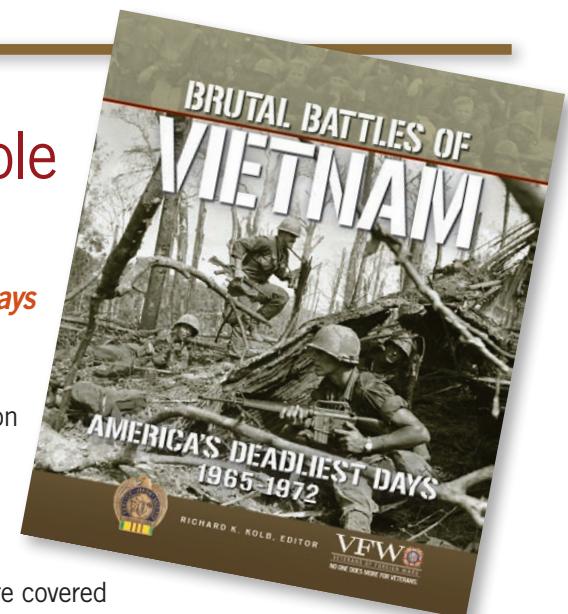
Famous battles such as Khe Sanh, Hue and Ia Drang Valley appear on these pages. But more important, numerous firefights that you should have known about but never did finally get their long overdue recognition.

Special features, sidebars, maps, numerous charts, a listing of the war's most highly decorated veterans, illustrations and the most in-depth combat chronology ever compiled complement the chapters.

In all, this book contains a treasure trove of information backed by exhaustive research, making it a collector's reference for every home library. While ensuring the legacy of those who served, it also makes a wonderful family keepsake.

If you don't pick up your copy while at VFW's convention, order by phone at 1-800-821-2606 or online at www.vfwstore.org. *Brutal Battles of Vietnam* is Item #4767.

Email: jdyhouse@vfw.org





New Orleans to Welcome VFW

'The Big Easy' Offers Attractions for Everyone

Those of you attending VFW's 118th National Convention in New Orleans, La., July 22-26, know the importance of the work at hand.

But make sure you take time to stroll the streets of the French Quarter or visit the National WWII Museum.

Also known as the "Crescent City," New Orleans is home to many sites of historic importance. In fact, there are 20 historic districts on the National Register, more than any other city in the United States.

Below is a sampling of things to do when you have a break from VFW business.

Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery
8606 West St. Bernard Highway
(504) 281-0510

Located about seven miles downriver from the French Quarter, this is the site of the Jan. 8, 1815, Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. There are daily park ranger talks at 10:45 a.m. and 2:45 p.m. when the Creole Queen Excursion boat docks at the battlefield. The cemetery is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Americans representing conflicts from the War of 1812 to the Vietnam War are buried in Chalmette.

Jackson Barracks Military Museum
Jackson Barracks, Area C
4209 Chenault Blvd.
(504) 278-8664

This museum tells the story of Louisiana's National Guard from the colonial period through present day. On display are historic battalion flags, parade uniforms, diaries and a collection of war letters. Open Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Ogden Museum of Southern Art
925 Camp St.
(504) 539-9600

First opened in 2003 in the historic Warehouse Arts District, the museum is home to the largest and most comprehensive collection of southern art in the world, showcasing works from 15 southern states and the District of Columbia. Open Wednesday through Monday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Thursdays 6-8 p.m.

Jackson Square
700 Decatur St.
(504) 658-3200

A park in the historic French Quarter, Jackson Square was originally known as Place d'Arme, a military parade ground. Today it serves as a meeting place for musicians, artists, historians and tourists.

National WWII Museum
945 Magazine Street
(504) 528-1944

Opened in June 2000, the National WWII Museum boasts 19 galleries, 190,000 artifacts and 8,800 personal accounts. Visitors can walk through a recreation of the Ardennes Forest of Belgium and Luxembourg and experience what it was like during America's first battles with the German and Italian armies in North Africa. The museum is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

St. Louis Cathedral
615 Pere Antoine Alley
(504) 525-9585

St. Louis Cathedral is the oldest continuously operating Catholic cathedral in the United States. Since 1727, New Orleanians have worshipped here. Free tours are offered several times every day. A small garden behind the cathedral has a memorial to the victims of yellow fever, which plagued the mosquito-infested city in the 18th and 19th centuries. Open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. with daily Mass at 12:05 p.m.



Convention Items of Note

Take Advantage of the Health Fair in New Orleans

If this is your first time attending a VFW National Convention, you won't want to miss the first-timer's meet and greet and orientation to be held on Sunday afternoon. Attending this event will help you get a clearer understanding of convention proceedings and an introduction to the various meetings and workshops.

Download the 118th VFW National Convention app to stay on top of any last-minute changes. It is available in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store by searching VFWNOLA2017.

Convention-goers would be remiss to miss a trip to the health fair, sponsored by Humana. Located in the "pre-function" space just outside the Great Hall, the health fair is a staple of the convention.

Attendees can have a variety of screenings, including vision, blood pressure and skin cancer. At conventions past, lives have been saved thanks to health fair wellness checks.

See below for a complete list of companies expected in New Orleans.

Health Fair Participants

- American Academy of Dermatology
- America's VetDogs—The Veterans K-9 Corps Inc.
- American Liver Foundation
- American Optometric Association
- AAANeurysm Outreach
- Asbestos.com
- B&B Medical Services Inc.
- Clear Captions
- Defense Centers of Excellence
- Delta Dental of California
- Elizabeth Dole Foundation
- Give an Hour
- Humana
- Medtronic Care Management Services Inc.
- One Mind & PatientsLikeMe
- Orcam
- Oticon Inc.
- Proficient Formulas Inc.
- Sivantos Inc.
- Hep C Hope
- Superior Products Inc.
- VA
- Veterans Health Information Exchange
- VA Office Research & Development/ Million Veteran Project
- VA's Mental Health Services
- VA Office of Connected Care- Telehealth MHV
- New Orleans VA Medical Center
- Walgreens



A volunteer optometrist with the American Optometric Association examines a VFW member as part of the health fair offered at the 116th National Convention in Pittsburgh on July 19, 2015. This is the 21st year VFW has organized a health fair with free health screenings for attendees.

Comments From the Judges

Great, clear photos and local content.

Good, original, local content and use of color. Lighten black and white photos for clearer printing.

Love the detailed photo captions!

Use font styles consistently, especially within a page. Would also like to see more action in photos.

Great original local content and photos!

Looks good! Recommend another editing read and spellcheck before publication.

Good publication, but would like to see original feature stories. Also credit VFW magazine when reprinting articles.

Great work overall. Consider printing on 11x17 and folding for easier handling.

Your "By the Numbers" on Christmas was great. Beautiful publication!

VFW Honors 16 Publications

National Publications Contest Entries Nearly Double

Thanks to all of the participants of the 2017 VFW National Publications Contest. Covering the 2016 calendar year, the contest garnered 79 entries, 45 more than last year.

Entries came in from 48 Posts/Districts and six Departments. There were three submissions for the "Best Magazine" category, and 22 submissions for "Best Feature Article." Of the 79 entries, 16 placed.

Two non-VFW-affiliated journalism professionals served as judges for the competition. This is designed to guarantee impartiality and objectivity in the judging.

The Checkpoint staff congratulates all entrants for their hard work and service to their respective members. The pool of entries this year proved to be very competitive.

If you have suggestions for how we can improve the National Publications Contest for 2018, write to us at VFW Publications Contest, 406 W. 34th Street, Suite 523, Kansas City, MO 64111.

Email: kwilliams@vfw.org

2017 VFW National Publications Contest Winners

Magazine

Grand Award:

Texas VFW News

Editor: Roy Grona



Silver Award:

The Leader Magazine (North Carolina)

Editor: Greg Stafford

Best Feature Article

Grand Award:

Pennsylvania VFW News

Article: "PA VFW's Eagle Award Honors National Guardians" by David A. Sandman, August/September 2016

Department of Pennsylvania

Silver Award:

Wisconsin VFW News

Article: "Fisher House Wisconsin dedicated in Milwaukee"

May/June 2016

Department of Wisconsin

Bronze Award:

Article: "Hurricane Matthew/Operation Flood Relief" Winter issue 2016-17

Department of North Carolina



Department Publications

Large Frequency

(printed 5+ times per year)

Grand Award:

Wisconsin VFW News

Editor: Marla J. Morgan

Silver Award:

The VFW Voice (Iowa)

Editor: Linda Jones

Bronze Award:

Pennsylvania VFW News

Editor: David A. Sandman



Department Publications

Small Frequency

(printed 1-4 times per year)

Grand Award:

Arizona VFW News

Editor: Ski Kuczynski

Silver Award:

The VFW Voice (Iowa)

Editor: Linda Jones

Bronze Award:

Pennsylvania VFW News

Editor: David A. Sandman

Post/District Publications

Large Frequency

(printed 5+ times per year)

Grand Award:

VFW Post 5864 Newsletter Post 5864

Editor: Steve Milbourn

Department of Indiana

Silver Award:

Monthly Newsletter Post 10818

Editor: Ron Ramos

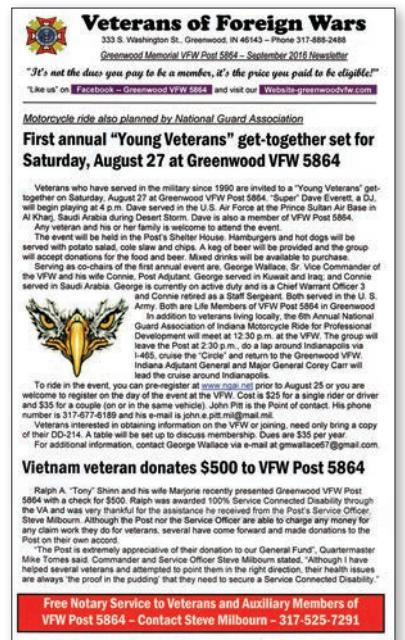
Department of Wisconsin

Bronze Award:

Informer Post 2866

Editor: Candace Wansing

Department of Missouri



Post/District Publications

Small Frequency

(printed 1-4 times per year)

Grand Award:

VFW Post 4709 Post 4709

Editor: W.L. "Strick" Strickland

Department of Texas

Silver Award:

VFW Post 2016 News Post: 2016

Editor: Ski Iworsky

Department of Massachusetts

Bronze Award:

Official Newsletter Post 10406

Editor: Al Kochenderfer

Department of Wisconsin



Email: kwilliams@vfw.org

VFW Posts Give U.S. Flags 'Dignified' Retirement

June 14 marked National Flag Day, a day that Americans show respect to Old Glory on the anniversary of its adoption in 1777.

Though the American flag has been a symbol of our nation for 240 years, the physical cloth of the flag does not last as long. To show respect to the U.S. and its symbol of freedom, disposing of the American flag properly is of utmost importance.

"The flag represents who we are as a country," said VFW Programs Director Lynn Rolf. "We should give a dignified retirement ceremony to each flag."

Many VFW Posts have been known to have held ceremonies to retire flags in their communities. Post 7728 in Morrisville, Va., is one example.

For the past five years, Post 7728 members have held a flag retirement ceremony for its community to commemorate National Flag Day. Post Commander Russell Claar said

holding a ceremony is a great way to get involved with serving a community.

"People don't know what to do with tattered old flags, and they don't want to be disrespectful and throw them in the trash," Claar said. "It's important to teach the community proper flag etiquette."

Each year, the Post has held the ceremony with Boy Scout Troop 1930. Claar said Post members and Boy Scouts hold the ceremony for American flags collected by community members.

"The Boy Scouts have a different procedure of disposing the flag, so we combine our methods for the ceremony," Claar said. "But, we still retire the flags with respect."

Claar also said the Post's flag retirement ceremony "grows every year."

"We've done it so many years that

community members bring flags to our Post, because they know we will take care of them," Claar said. "Our community is just wonderful."

Post 7333 in Randolph, N.J., also holds annual National Flag Day retirement ceremonies for its community. For about the past 15 years, the Post has retired 1,400-1,600 U.S. flags, including about 800 from local cemeteries.

"The first year our Post did this, we retired 3,000 flags that had been kept at the Post," said Jack Sassaman, Post quartermaster and programs chairman. "Now, people here bring their old flags to a deposit box at the Post throughout the year because they know we do these ceremonies every year."

Email: dspiva@vfw.org

VFW-recommended procedures for disposing a U.S. flag

To dispose of U.S. flags properly, according to VFW standards, they must be folded in a customary manner, much the same as a funeral detail. Then, the flag should be placed on a fairly large fire, which is sufficient enough to ensure the total consumption of the flag.

VFW Programs Director Lynn Rolf recommends using safety precautions when retiring nylon flags in an open fire pit and to "not to stand down wind due to the smoke and fumes."

While the flag is being consumed by the fire, it is recommended an individual or ceremony detail come to attention and salute the flag. It also is recommended everybody in attendance recite the Pledge of Allegiance and hold a moment of silence one last time for the flag.

After the flag in the fire is completely consumed, the fire should be safely extinguished and the ashes buried. Rolf recommends burying the ashes in "a cemetery, sacred or authorized grounds."

Rolf said that Post members may contact their state attorney's office if they need information about ceremonial flag burning.

"Some states have their own rules and regulations they abide by regarding the handling of the U.S. flag," Rolf said. "They may contact us here in the Programs Department at VFW Headquarters."

For more information on flag etiquette, go to www.vfw.org/community/flag-etiquette.



"The flag represents who we are as a country. We should give a dignified retirement ceremony to each flag."

—Lynn Rolf,
VFW Programs Director.

VFW Post 7728 in Morrisville, Va., along with Boy Scout Troop 1930, retired more than 300 flags in June 2016.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FAUQUIERNOW.COM



Then-Post 7333 Commander Jack Sassaman lights the fire as more than 1,200 flags were honorably retired in June 2016 at the Post in Randolph, N.J..

PHOTO BY JOYCE BAMBACH/REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION BY RANDOLPH REPORTER AND NEW JERSEY HILLS MEDIA GROUP



A VFW volunteer extinguishes the fire following Post 7728's flag retirement ceremony in June 2016. VFW recommends respectfully burying the flag ashes.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FAUQUIERNOW.COM

Connecticut VFW Recognizes Burger King Franchisee

VFW Department of Connecticut's National Military Services chairman Lee Wilson and then-Department Commander John Schmidt present Burger King franchisee Stan Paulauskas with three plaques in April for his support of VFW's *Unmet Needs* Program. Also pictured are Alicia Dimick, Burger King assistant manager; Carmen Pena, Burger King store manager, and Yanivette Garcia, cashier.

In one month, Paulauskas' three restaurants, located in Windsor, Windsor Locks and Enfield, raised more than \$5,000. Since 2007, select Burger King franchisees have partnered with VFW to support *Unmet Needs*.

Through this program, active-duty or discharged vets can apply for grants up to \$5,000. The funds may be used to pay for such items as mortgage, rent, vehicle expenses, insurance, utilities, food, childcare expenses and medical bills, among others. More than 4,000 families have been assisted through *Unmet Needs* grants since the program began in 2004. More than \$6 million has been awarded in that time. For more information on VFW's *Unmet Needs* program, visit www.vfw.org/assistance/financial-grants.



JULY | AUGUST 2017

CHECKPOINT

VFW NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS • PUBLICATIONS
406 WEST 34TH STREET, KANSAS CITY, MO 64111

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
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VFW

Posts with the Most

VFW POSTS OF 1,000 MEMBERS OR MORE AS OF MAY 5, 2017

Rank	Post No.	Location	Members	Rank No.	Location	Members	Rank No.	Location	Members
1	1503	Dale City, VA.....	2,818	11	7968 Apache Junction, AZ.....	1,533	28	9399 Apache Junction, AZ.....	1,146
2	27	Wiesbaden, Germany.....	2,606	12	76 San Antonio, TX.....	1,464	29	549 Tucson, AZ.....	1,132
3	1114	Evansville, IN.....	2,148	13	6506 Rosedale, MD.....	1,443	30	2111 Chula Vista, CA.....	1,131
4	9972	Sierra Vista, AZ.....	2,021	14	4647 North Highlands, CA.....	1,388	31	56 Leavenworth, KS.....	1,125
5	8862	Vicenza, Italy.....	1,858	15	10047 North Las Vegas, NV.....	1,376	32	2503 Omaha, NE.....	1,090
6	392	Virginia Beach, VA.....	1,780	16	63 Boise, ID.....	1,351	33	972 Terre Haute, IN.....	1,084
7	4709	Conroe, TX.....	1,776	17	9342 Ansbach, Germany.....	1,342	34	3282 Port Orange, FL.....	1,079
8	10692	Grafenwoehr, Germany.....	1,753	18	2391 Saint Augustine, FL.....	1,302	34	7686 Alamogordo, NM.....	1,079
9	9785	Eagle River, AK.....	1,724	19	7234 Ocean View, DE.....	1,287	36	1512 Lemon Grove, CA.....	1,058
10	2485	Angeles City, Philippines.....	1,672	20	628 Sioux Falls, SD.....	1,270	37	10281 Radcliff, KY.....	1,049
				21	4372 Odessa, TX.....	1,245	38	1170 Middletown, KY.....	1,026
				22	6873 Abilene, TX.....	1,238	39	7564 West Fargo, ND.....	1,022
				23	4809 Norfolk, VA.....	1,228	40	969 Tacoma, WA.....	1,021
				24	10097 Fort Myers Beach, FL.....	1,208	41	1273 Rapid City, SD.....	1,020
				25	1146 St Clair Shores, MI.....	1,196	42	2866 Saint Charles, MO.....	1,019
				26	8951 West York, PA.....	1,192	43	1326 Bismarck, ND.....	1,010
				27	10216 Songtan-Si, Korea.....	1,176	44	10436 Kitzingen, Germany.....	1,003

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"It was way too quiet. Something was wrong. One of my NCOs noticed a guy run around the corner and put his hand up his shirt. He blew up. The guy behind me was killed instantly..."

CPT Mark Brogan, USA
Iraq Veteran



For more information and insight about the Heroes With Hearing Loss® program, and to see more of Mark's story, visit:

HeroesWithHearingLoss.org/Mark