



Department of South Carolina

SENTINEL



Commander – ED STEFANAK, Jr



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

South Carolina



Auxiliary President – BETH TUFTS

An Official Publication of the Department of South Carolina Veterans of Foreign Wars
210 Glassmaster Road, Lexington, SC 29072

Vfwsc.org

803-808-0317

FIRST QUARTER Jan – Mar 2023

ALL AMERICAN STATE 2021-2022

*It's not the price you pay to become a member.
It's the price you paid to become eligible!*



State Commander Ed Stefanak Jr

The days are numbered for the 2022-2023 year. This year has flown and that is normally an indication that it has been a good year and it certainly has been.

Let's not rest on our laurels, finish this year strong and let's begin the 2023-2024 year strong. Thanks for all your hard work comrades.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING STATE AWARD WINNERS

Patriot's Pen Winners:

Dept Winner - Haley Kathleen Justice, Post 9539 District 8
2nd place - Matthew A. Ponkow, Post 3137 District 1
3rd place - Callie J. McDougall, Post 6740 District 2

Voice of Democracy:

Dept Winner - Zoey Hughes, Post 641 District 20
2nd Place Sarah Campbell, Post 9539 District 8
3rd Place Alyssa Hurdich, Post 10804 District 7

Cadet Awards:

Civil Air Patrol Cadet - SMSGT Jachai A. Schweitzer, Post 12102 District 1
Naval Sea Cadet - PO2 Nathan Wrigley, Post 3137 District 1
JROTC - Josiah Fortenberry, Post 6932 District 9

Public Safety Awards:

Law Enforcement Officer - James Paul Jernigan, Post 10804 District 7
911 Dispatcher - Murzette Sherrie Hilton, Post 10256 District 1
Firefighter - Frank Hauber, Post 10256 District 1

Communication Awards:

Best Newsletter - District 1 (*Honorable mentions: Posts 10804, 445, 3433, 12102, 6091*)
Outstanding Post Media - Post 6444 District 7
Outstanding District Media - District 1
Outstanding Website Award - Post 8738 District 2

Department Teacher's Citizenship Education Award.

Overall winner:

Kimberly Stokes
9-12 Grade
Post 11079 Elgin
District 2

First Place K-5:

Summer Abukhomra
Post 10256 Goose Creek
District 1

First Place 6-8 Grade:

Gerilyn Leland
Post 445 Charleston
District 1

IT'S ALMOST ELECTION TIME

ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THAT NEXT BIG STEP IN YOUR VFW INVOLVEMENT??

The following are your electable opportunities:

POST LEVEL	DISTRICT LEVEL	STATE LEVEL
Commander	Commander	Commander
Sr Vice Commander	Sr Vice Commander	Sr Vice Commander
Jr Vice Commander	Jr Vice Commander	Jr Vice Commander
Quartermaster	Quartermaster	Quartermaster
Chaplain	Chaplain	Chaplain
Trustees	Judge Advocate	*Judge Advocate
	Surgeon	*Surgeon
	Trustees	

*If election required by Department By-Laws

NOTE: At the Post & District level, every electable position is open to any member in good standing. That includes YOU, the new member.

At the State level. Once you are elected Jr. Vice Commander, it is expected that you will “progress through the chairs (Jr Vice, Sr Vice, Commander). BUT, since these are elected positions. Any member in good standing “could” seek nomination and election of any of those top 3 positions.

At National level, once elected Jr. Vice Commander in Chief, that person will progress to National Commander UNLESS that person withdraws from consideration.

Technically; Someone could challenge for the Sr Vice or Commander position, but this does not happen at the National level.

POW-MIA – Have you ever wondered why the MIA (Missing in Action) numbers seem so high? It is because that since WW II, the US Navy has considered every Sailor/Marine lost at sea from a ship sinking (and their body not recovered) is considered Missing In Action. With a caveat that says “but presumed drowned”!

There are currently over 81,000+ veterans on the MIA Rolls. Of that, 32,000+ are under the above Navy classification.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Does your post have these words posted anywhere that the public can see them. Maybe on your outside post sign, or announced in any media type (newspaper, radio spot, flyer, etc). If your post operates any type of canteen or a bar and you advertise “open to the public”. Technically; any alcoholic beverages your canteen sells to members of the public who come in the door and are not invited guests of a post member. Should be charged the state tax on such products. Additionally; advertising open to the public could cause your post to lose it’s 501 status and all it’s non-profit benefits, if the state so chose.

There is nothing wrong with saying (for a particular event) “public invited”/”public welcome”

NOTE: The National By-Laws say the VFW is for members only. Other than Section 709 Control of Units, the National By-Laws make no mention of a “canteen” other than to say it must be properly insured. Your Post must clearly define canteen operations in a Canteen By Laws or other canteen controlled document.

DID YOU KNOW – That when displaying the VFW Cross of Malta. That there is a specific background color that it must be displayed on to denote the level of the VFW organization? Section 802 of the National Bi-Laws states the colors and identification shall be:

National Convention – PURPLE

Departments – MAROON, with the colors depicting the name of the Department

Districts – MAROON OVER WHITE, with the colors depicting the name of the Department and numerical designation of the District

Posts – NAVY BLUE, with the name and number of the Post

NATIONAL By-LAWS, Section 719 Past Officers

Elected or appointed officers who complete their terms of office, or are properly relieved of their position according to the dictates of this section, are considered Past Officers. However; If the officer is considered ineligible for the office held, or if for whatever reason, their membership is terminated. That person is not entitled to be identified as a Past Officer.

NATIONAL By-LAWS, Section 908 Administrative Actions

*When a member is suspended by their post by way of properly executed Disciplinary Action. That person's membership is transferred to the Department Member at Large membership. Once that suspension is completed. The member, if they so desire, may request transfer to any post, with approval at the discretion of the Department Commander.

*If a member transfers from their Post to another post to avoid the possibility of disciplinary action? The Department Commander or Commander-in-Chief has the authority to transfer that member back to the Post where disciplinary action is pending.

LOOKING TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL/CONTINUE YOUR COLLEGE EDUCATION?

Here are the Colleges/University's that are recommended/approved by the VA & DoD for ON-LINE studies

Strayer University

Herzing University

Capella University

St. Leo University

Maryville College

University of Arkansas

ECPI University

Southern New Hampshire University

LSU Shreveport

Walden College

University of Maryland (Worldwide)

National University

Keiser University

Information about all of these schools and their veteran programs can be found in a web site under VA approved on-line education.

AROUND THE STATE

****DILLON POST 6091** – A “job-well-done” by them and specifically post members LLOYD BROWN & JOHN HARLOW. Post 6091 used Martin Luther King Day as a “Day-of-Service” and

went to a local prison to talk to incarcerated veterans. This took a little doing in that they had to get the permission of the Chief Deputy and the Sheriff.

Once with the veterans, they engaged in general conversation (they weren't allowed to discuss the specific cases that got the veteran where they were), helped with helping to fill out any VA claims forms and the needs of the families. Post 6091 left with a promise that they would keep in touch and with the intent of sending Veterans Day and Christmas Cards to each veteran inmate.

Post 6091 also partnered with their local library to teach how to hold a meeting and how to conduct teaching classes using ZOOM. They did this once a week during February.

Post 6091 also contributed funds to help clean and restore the grave site of a Navy veteran of the Barbary Coast Wars and the War of 1812. The gravesite was at a church in Jacksonboro, SC. Post 6091 had responded to a funds request from a VFW post in Georgia.

Want to find out about all the good things Post 6091 is doing? Check out their Monthly Newsletter and maybe get some ideas for your post!

****COLLETON COUNTY POST 12102-** Back in February, honored their local VA Officer Janet Smith with a Certificate of Appreciation for the work she is doing in helping area veterans. This is a great way to recognize those people who are doing good things for your local veterans.

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS THAN THE VFW. Thank you Post 6091!



N. Myrtle Beach Post 10804's Bill La Monte shown with Myrtle Beach VA Clinic Volunteer Services Manager Mrs. Anderson. Bill is delivering 28 Food Lion feed the hungry food boxes and 10 long sleeve turtle neck sweater-shirts.

Food Lion sells the price of those food boxes and then gives them to charitable organizations who feed the hungry. As in Bill's case, they occasionally have more boxes than takers. So, they gave him the 28 boxes they had on hand and Bill gave them to the VA Clinic's United to

Combat Hunger program. All you have to do is ask!!

NOTE: A couple of weeks later, Bill delivered to the VA Clinic another **101** Food Lion Feeds food boxes that were donated by a Myrtle Beach are Food Lion. He also delivered another 20 donated shirts.

CONGRATULATIONS VSO TEAM

Your Veterans Service Office was evaluated by the National Veterans Service Office back in mid-January. THANKS to J. J. Johnson and Nicole Johnson for earning a very favorable evaluation. Besides evaluating the state office. The evaluators provided some helpful tips in getting Post Service Officers engaged in helping veterans.

Have YOU signed up a new member, reinstated an old member or signed a member to a Life Membership???



CREDIT CARDS -Do you know that in the first six months of 2022, you the American consumer, started over 244 million new credit card accounts.

If you have more than two credit cards in your pocket? You are unwittingly contributing to your personal credit card debt and making the credit card companies richer by the second. Why? because with the additional cards in your pocket. It makes it easier to buy that item YOU WANT vs YOU NEED. Just charge it.

Are you also aware that if you have a multi-thousand dollar credit card debt? If you make the 'minimum payment' recommended by the credit card company? You will NEVER pay off that debt.

My suggestion to you. Cut-up all credit cards beyond two. Work hard to pay off the cut-up ones with the least amount of debt, and ALWAYS pay more than the minimum on the remaining two cards.

I have two cards only because if there is a fraud charge on your account and the bank/credit card company closes that account. Your 2nd card will help until a new card can be issued because of the one terminated because of fraud.

HINT: We pay off our credit card every month, thus avoiding interest on the account.

VIETNAM 1973

The war is winding down and the first two months of 1973 play a pivotal part. Things were happening every day. Here are some of the events of note:

*Jan 10th – The first time a B-52 pilot refuses to fly a bombing mission. He accuses Sac of laxity in the performance of their duty thus causing the unnecessary loss of aircrews and their aircraft. Up to that time, he had flown 174 B-52 missions,

*Jan 19th – A second B-52 pilot refuses his assigned mission (over North Vietnam).

*Jan 23rd – Nixon announces a cease fire going into effect at 8AM on Sunday Jan 28th

*Just 11 hours before the Cease Fire, Lt Col William B. Nolde is killed and he is recognized as being the last American to die in the Vietnam War

*Jan 29th- Warrant Officer Anthony Dal Pozzo is the first American killed after the cease-fire started.

Feb 8th – The two B-52 pilots are discharged from the Air Force with 'Less Than Honorable' discharges

Feb 25th – Henry Kissinger goes on NBC TV and announces the US will require a full accounting of the 1,300 men missing and accounted for in Southeast Asia.

AND THE WAR WINDS DOWN

You and your Compensation Pension Exam:

*To know what you are getting into; you should first – **Review the VA Benefits Questionnaire**- so you have an idea of what is going to be asked

***Write down your symptoms** and have a list of the questions you want to ask the examiner

*Focus on the questions that pertain to the events leading up to your filing a VA disability claim

****At EVERY exam mention how your condition effects your ability to work. If unemployed, state whether your condition effected your employability.**

***Talk to your VSO.** They can be instrumental in guiding you to ask the right questions.

*If your claim involves your legs, knees or feet? Make sure you tell the examiner how much you rely on your assistive devices (Cain, wheel-Chair, Crutches, etc)

*Examiners may try to show how your post-service work caused/contributed to your condition. You need to THOROUGHLY discuss your military experiences. If you DID NOT report your injury while on military duty. You need to explain why.

Vietnam and Pension Exam info courtesy of The VVA Veteran

******The PACT Act and K 2 Uzbekistan** – For those 15,000+ veterans who served in/around K 2 from 2001 to 2005. The PACT Act did not cover your toxic exposure while at K 2! You need to push the VA to allow you to register under the Burn Pit Registry

The VFW website www.pactactinfo.org is the easy way to talk to a VFW VA accredited Service Officer (if you qualify) within one-week of submitting an on-line form. A short series of questions will determine whether you are likely eligible for VA benefits. Going to the website will generate a simple series of questions that only involve getting; your name, email address, state of residence, location of your military service, suspected or diagnosed time of military service and symptoms.



There are Bills before the Senate that would benefit veterans if passed? One being Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act- (HR 7158) Basically this allows veterans who don't want to be, or can't be alone to be placed in "medical foster-homes" (living with a couple or family) at their request. The VA would be required to pay the veteran expenses while at these homes. The legislation would only cover 900 veterans per year. If you want to see this Bill pass, contact Senators Graham and Scott and let them know you support this bill.

MILITARY RECRUITING – In Trouble

Not long ago, DoD conducted a survey of military age Americans (17 – 24). They did not say how many they surveyed, nor how many responded to the survey. It found:

*Only 23% of military age candidates are qualified to serve. This is down 6% over previous years

NOTE: The increase in obesity, drug use and criminal records contributed significantly to this decline

*Only 9% of the 23%eligible, said they 'might' serve

*57% of those who answered the survey said that if they served, they thought they might have emotional or psychological problems and 50%thought they might develop physical problems.

*Only 13% of the respondents said they had a parent that had served in the military (down fom 40% in 1995).

*Contributing to this decline. In 2021 only 45% of Americans said they had trust and confidence in the military (down 25% points since 2018)

*An Army study in 2021 found that 75% of the respondents said they knew little or nothing about what the U.S. Army is.

CURRENT RECRUITING

*ARMY – With 3 months left in the recruiting year. Army is at only 40% of its recruiting goal

*SPACE FORCE – Will meet its goal of 500 new recruits

- *AIR FORCE – Is 4,000 recruits below its intended goal (ANG & Reserves will meet goals)
- *NAVY – Says they expect to meet goals. Primarily because of the Top Gun movies.
- *MARINES – Say they will meet goals
- *COAST GUARD – Is only at 80% of Reserve Force, 95% of its Officer Force and only 55% of its Enlisted Force recruiting goals. They did not say if they expect to meet their goals.

The Pentagon is turning its sites on the parents, teachers and coaches in an effort to get them to help with recruiting. The Pentagon also plans on opening more multiple-branch recruiting stations to give potential recruits a better choice than that offered by a single branch recruiting office.

***The Pentagon and DoD put most of the recruiting decline over the last couple of years on COVID

From your State Surgeon – GENE BRYNT

This year is getting ready to wind down and we still have quite a ways to go yet, but I wanted to give everyone an update on what I have accomplished thus far this year as your state surgeon. May 5th 2023 will be the fourth VFW blood drive that I have held at headquarters this year. The first three have been successes with over 45 blood donations collected. I am hoping that this final one of this administrative year will go off without a hitch and we hit my overall goal of over 60 blood donations collected which means we only need 15 more donors on May 5th. Also, as your State Surgeon I have visited eight posts around SC, with another 4 planned within the next couple of weeks. I have also been assigned the National VAVS representative for the state and have visited three Vet Centers in the state. I have attended all the VAVS meetings in Spartanburg and Columbia with another meeting scheduled on the 29th of March that I plan on attending as well. I have made a lot of connections around the state and have even written the Standard Operating Procedure for the State Surgeon's position. Also, as part of my duties and responsibilities, I will be attending the SC Physically Handicap Society Convention in Florence, coming up this May. I say all of this not to pat myself on the back, but to let you, the Veterans of Foreign Wars know that I enjoy what I do and it is because of your support that I can continue to do what I enjoy. My focus has always been and continues to be supporting all of you in any way I can. If that means I have to travel to a Vet Clinic or VA to find out what issues they are having as to why you may not be receiving assistance, then that is what I will do. I have had to do it for Greenwood and Spartanburg VFW members and veterans of those areas, I will do it for all of you as well. If I know about a problem, I can work to find a solution to that problem, but I cannot fix what I am not informed about. If anyone needs my assistance with anything, please feel free to reach out to me. **I can be reached at Department Headquarters Mon – Thurs 8:30 AM to 3P, or via email at admin@vfwsc.org anytime day or night.**

Thank you for all your continued support and I look forward to hopefully being the State Surgeon for another year.

“Veterans First, Family Always”

Gene Bryant, State Surgeon

Looking to put on an event at your post, you want food available, but you have no canteen/kitchen. CALL IN THE FOOD TRUCKS! Chances are that there are food trucks operating in

your area. Most of these vendors look for opportunities to have a gathering where they can concentrate their sales. All you have to do is talk to them. Depending on the number of people expected and the type of food you want available. You may need to work with more than one food truck. You just negotiate a percentage of sales or a flat fee for your posts take on the day, or you may just let the vendor operate for free if your interest is to use them to get people to your event.

MID-WINTER CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 2023

First off, South Carolina VFW wants to thank our National Representatives for making our convention that much better by them being here. THANK YOU!



Adjutant General – DAN WEST

National District Council Member#9 -DEBORAH CROWDER

COUNCIL of ADMINISTRATION



My take on the Council of Administration

- *215 is the number I was given as registered for the conference. This included comrades and auxiliary
- *The State Quartermaster reported that when you are doing Trustee Reports, make sure items 14 & 16 match. Many posts submit trustee reports with these numbers NOT matching
- *She also reported that the Department Convention is coming and if you want to vote in the elections? Make sure your post pays it's DELEGATE DUES
- *For those posts that filed their tax exempt forms (every post should have by now), the IRS has not yet sent out any TAX EXEMPT approvals yet.
- *A reminder that the QUARTERMASTER is responsible for submitting election reports and they must be sent electronically through the OMS system.

- *Proposed changes to the By Laws can now be e-mailed
 - *Posts are reminded that they need to send in their \$25 National Convention fee.
 - *There are 12 state bills that SC VFW is supporting. As of this time, five (5) have been brought to the floor for discussion
 - *The VFW encourages the support of the “Adopt-A-Unit” program. SC VFW now has 16 adopted units, up from 4 just a couple of years ago.
 - *If you, a veteran, are considering the Camp LeJeune litigation? You are encouraged to use the VA or the two VA/VFW approved law offices
 - ***PACT ACT** – If you think you may have any of the illnesses/conditions/symptoms associated with the expanded Pact Act list? You need to get registered through the VA.
 - ***660 students** participated in this year’s Patriots Pen competition
 - ***155 students** participated in this years Voice of Democracy competition
 - ***ONLY 23 posts** submitted entries in the Teacher Award program
 - *The State Inspector reported that he had only 14 posts that have submitted their inspections
 - ***For you Post Commanders** and your upcoming elections – **Article 216 of the By Laws** now makes the **Chaplain** position an **Appointed** position, NOT elected.
 - ***The Delegate Fee** for state elections is **\$5.00** for each authorized post delegate. Posts must elect their delegates at the April elections.
- Department Elections** in June – Right now there are 3 declared candidates for the Jr. Vice Commander position, 2 declared candidates for the Department Quartermaster and 2 declared candidates for the Judge Advocate position.
- NOTE PSC Rodney Burne has withdrawn himself from all considerations for any position elected or appointed

During the morning Business Meeting, a few awards were presented. They are:

All State Awards for 2021-2022

- ***DISTRICT** – District 4, Commander Jeffrey Hunter and Quartermaster Doug Way
- ***POSTS** – Post 445 – Commander James Barger and Quartermaster Richard Slonin
 Post 4262 – Commander Tony Brown and Quartermaster Arthur Jamison
 Post 6830 - Commander Scott Sullinger and Quartermaster Robert Farmer
 Post 10624 –Quartermaster Debanjan Datta

- Communications Award – Best Newsletter – District 1**
- Outstanding District Media – District 1**
- Outstanding Post Media – Post 6444 Georgetown**
- Outstanding Post Website – Post 8738**

District Early-Bird Awards -Districts 2, 7 and 8
Post Early-Bird Awards- Post 445, 3137, 10811, 12102, 3034

The award winners or their award acceptors





Your State Voice of Democracy, Patriot Pen and Teacher Award Winners



VOD – HALEY JUSTICE



PP – ZOEV HUGHES



TEACHER – KIMBERLY STOKES

YOUR STATE HONOR GUARD



REGISTRATION & VENDORS





AROUND THE CONFERENCE







Hello South Carolina!

As my year as Department President draws to a close, I must admit I am sad to see my year end. It has been a pleasure to be with each and every one of you. Your love and support have made my life's dream of being a Department of South Carolina President come true! You have truly made the 2022-2023 year a success for all of us. It has been amazing to see all the Bumblebees that have buzzed around the state all year. I have enjoyed going around the state and meeting so many of you. I have loved being at your meetings and getting to know you. I have made many, many friends this year. Please consider yourself one of them. I am proud to announce many of you as a Bumblebee in 2023. Your hard work is appreciated. Your work for membership has the Department of South Carolina at nearly 104% at this writing. We have consistently been second in the Nation in current memberships. Thank you, South Carolina. We could not have done it without the work put in by all of you.

Our special project, the TAPS program has been supported throughout the state. At our brown bag auction at the Conference we raised \$4478! Humana was gracious enough to put us to \$5000! Thank you to the many individuals and auxiliaries that provided the brown bags. Many of you received "Gold Award" pins at the Conference in recognition of your support of TAPS! Thank you so much for supporting "Our Special Project." It would not be a successful project without the hard work you have all put into it. It is definitely "Our Special Project!" I am amazed at the support you have shown not to just me but to the whole Department.

I cannot let this go by without thanking you for the wonderful adventures you sent me on! The cruise to the Mexican Riviera in January was without a doubt one of the most exciting experiences of my life! When you sent me to Washington, DC in March for the Legislative Conference I did my very best to represent the VFW Auxiliary of the Department of South Carolina. I worked hard to present to our SC Congressmen and Senators the 2023 VFW Legislative Goals. I helped campaign for the enactment of the Guard VA Benefits Act that has now been introduced in Congress. This enactment will provide criminal penalties for unaccredited representatives who charge unauthorized fees for helping veterans file claims for VA disability compensation benefits.

Thank you, South Carolina for making my dream come true. You have all been wonderful to me and I truly, truly appreciate it.

Sincerely, with lots of hugs!!
Beth

LET'S DO SOME RECRUITING

The following are events in your areas that can be recruiting events. This is how we get new members, they won't come to us. If you need any assistance setting these events up, contact Membership Captain Reedy Hopkins, or Membership Co-Captain Mary Azbell.

District 1

- 4/1-4/2 – Historic Pendleton Spring Jubilee – Pendleton
- 4/6-4/8 – Lowcountry Strawberry Festival II – Mount Pleasant
- 4/20-4/23 – Charleston Jazz Festival – Charleston
- 4/21-4/23- Black Food Truck Festival – Charleston
- 4/22 – Charleston Spring Wine Festival – Charleston

4/22 – Lowcountry Cajun Festival – Charleston
4/22 – Cookin’ in the Creek – Goose Creek
4/28-4/29 – Colleton County Rice Festival – Walterboro
4/30 – Blessing of the Fleet and Seafood Festival – Mount Pleasant
4/30 – Donut Fest Charleston – Charleston

District 2

4/1-4/2 – Columbia International Festival – Columbia
4/14-4/15 – Harambee 33 Festival – Columbia
4/19-4/23 – Columbia Food and Wine Festival – Columbia
4/22 – Sumter Art in the Park – Sumter
4/27-4/29 – Festival on the Avenue – Sumter

District 4

4/14-4/15 – Old Time Jam and Camping Weekend – Pickens
4/15 – Mac Arnold Cornbread and Collard Greens Blues Festival – Fountain Inn
4/20-4/23 – Euphoria Spring Fest – Greenville
4/21-4/22 – Newberry Pork in the Park – Newberry
4/28-4/29 – Pickens Azalea Festival – Pickens
4/28-4/29 – The Soiree – Anderson
4/28-4/29 – Hodges Spring Festival – Hodges
4/29 – Mauldin Blues and Jazz Festival – Mauldin
4/29 – Greer Goes Global International Festival – Greer
4/29 – Italian American Heritage Festival – Fountain Inn
4/30 – Tacos ‘N Tequila Fiesta – Greenville

District 5

4/21-4/22 – Come-See-Me Festival II – Rock Hill
4/22 – Charlotte Marathi Mandal Spring Festival – Lancaster
4/29 – Butts Cook-Off and Music Frenzy – Clover

District 6

4/13-4/15 – Puddin’ Swamp Festival – Turbeville
4/21-4/23 – Artfields I – Lake City
4/24-4/29 – Artfields II – Lake City

District 7

4/7-4/8 – Smoke on the Beach BBQ Festival – Myrtle Beach
4/29 – Shadow Bay Celtic Festival – Myrtle Beach
4/29-4/30 – Brookgreen Gardens Art Festival – Murrells Inlet

District 8

4/15-4/16 – Moon Fest: Spring – Chesnee
4/21-4/23 – Stone Soup Storytelling Festival – Woodruff
4/22 – Environmental Art and Music Festival – Union
4/28-4/30 – Riverfest Country Music Festival – Woodruff
4/28-4/30 – Spring Fling Street Festival – Spartanburg

District 9

4/14-4/16 – The South Carolina Food and Culture Festival – Aiken

4/21-4/22 – Striped Bass Festival – Manning

4/29-4/30* – Aiken Hot Air Balloon Festival – Aiken

THE VIETNAM VETERANS TRAVELLING WALL – Will be in Market Commons (Myrtle Beach) from 25 to 28 May. ALL veterans and civilians are invited to see this moving tribute to the men and women who lost their lives during the Vietnam War. As of right now, there are over **700 motorcycle riders** set to lead the wall to its temporary resting place in Myrtle Beach.

If you are interested in helping with any phase of “The Wall” arrival, setup, takedown, security, name reading? Please contact one of the following

General help- Chris Aranda at 843-232-2441

Stand Guard Duty – 2Lt Joseph Goldsmith at Joseph.Goldsmith@sg.sc.gov

Read Names of S.C. Deceased – Karen Levinson at klevinson@gmail.com

This might be a good opportunity for a Post or District to attend as a group (especially for us Vietnam Vets), or the state to attend as one.

REMEMBERING





You have faithfully served your Last Watch. Rest easy JIM McCLENDON



TREE OF VALOR

It all started with a young girl named Lexi, who sees good things in veterans. Her desire to show veterans that they were not forgotten, that they are not taken for granted. That they are important! With the help of the local hospital and some military connections, Lexi did so by giving out American flags at Halloween and Veterans Day near where she lives in Greensboro, NC. Little did she know that her desire to care for veterans would lead to a life commitment by herself and mother Lori. Lexi has Cerebral Palsy and Epilepsy. This makes her commitments and accomplishments that much more amazing.

Somewhere along the way they were given a Christmas Tree. Lori had the idea to put pictures of veterans on the tree and decorate it that way. A request went out for veteran pictures. A few pictures have evolved into thousands and one tree has evolved into a whole forest.

The Tree of Valor have been displayed in seven (7) counties in North Carolina, City Park in downtown Greensboro, the Cultural Arts Center and various vacant windows in the downtown area. Lexi's Tree can be seen at the Salisbury, NC Texas Road House Restaurant.

Tree of Valor are now and have been a prominent part of the N.C. VFW. They were displayed at the N.C. VFW State Convention in 2022, The VFW Southern Conference in 2022 and recently at S.C. VFW Mid-Winter Conference (Feb 2023). Tree of Valor is the Department of N.C.'s Commander's Special Project for this year.

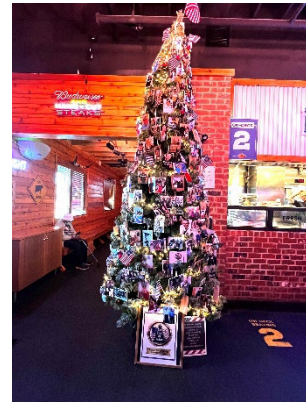
When Lori (and most time's Lexi) go to an event, they take 10-20 trees and hundreds of veteran pictures with them. While at the event, they will receive numerous new veteran pictures to add to the trees. There is the standard Green Christmas Tree that is for living Veterans and a White tree(s) for deceased veterans. For the most part, Lori does all the packing, transport, displaying and take down of their salute to Veterans. She is reluctant to ask for help at an event, but she can definitely use it.

If you would like to help in any way? You can call Lori Egerter at 717-515-7418 or visit them on their Facebook page, or go to TheTreeofValor@gmail.com

The Tree of Valor also partners with organizations dealing with teaching/promoting suicide awareness.



Mom, LORI & LEXI



LEXI'S Tree



A couple of the Tree of Valor at the Mid-Winter Conference



Pictured is State Commander Ed Stefanak, JR with National Center for Healthy Veterans Board of Directors member Chris Bourne (center) and National Adjutant General Dan West after Mr. Bourne gave a presentation on what the NCHV does to help veterans.

The NCHV emphasizes the value of each veteran, and its commitment to help all veterans achieve their full God-given potential through community, dignified work programs with advancement opportunities, faith-based recovery and life-skills programs, and a natural healing environment.

The NCHV works to help stop suicides and homelessness, aides in trauma recovery, promotes mental health in an effort to returning healthy veterans to America.

To learn more; Contact National Center for Healthy Veterans PO Box 74 Altavista, VA 24517, or at 888-317-4677 or www.healthyveterans.org or contact@healthyveterans.org

PS: Commander Stefanak signed up Mr. Bourne as a new VFW member right before this picture was taken.

WRITER/EDITOR NOTE February 4th : Today the world watched on TV the transitioning of the Chinese Balloon off the East Coast of Myrtle Beach, SC. And subsequent US Military shoot-down of the balloon.

I watched history being made in person from my home in Little River. I had watched the balloon for about 45 minutes. All the while military jets circling the balloon in a wide berth. Then I heard on the news that aircraft departures from airports in eastern North & South Carolina had been stopped in the interest of 'national safety' . In the mean-time, the military jets were circling closer and closer. With a jet contrail closer to the balloon than any previous passes, the balloon suddenly exploded. I could clearly see something separate from the explosion site (the news confirming it was whatever the metal array was that was attached to the balloon). I watched as the balloon fragment slowly descended towards earth.

Military aviation history was made today and I got to witness it first-hand!

Its time to start registering for the State Convention. Be there to support YOUR state VFW and to vote for the next slate of officers for the 2023-2024 year.

Check the State, your District, your Post calendars for upcoming events and try and support the successful conclusion of that activity.

Remember, if each of you members recruits just ONE new member, the SC VFW will double in size!!

The next SENTINEL is planned for publishing by July 10th. Plenty of time for you to get your good VFW deeds in to me for publication.

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