



Department of South Carolina *SENTINEL*



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

FIRST QUARTER (Jan – Mar) 2022

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

HAVING PROBLEMS? NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE?...The “VETERANS CRISIS LINE” is open 24/7. Just call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1. It takes an average of 8 seconds for your call to be answered. You are NOT alone!

HOT!! – The FCC has approved a new, 3 digit (988) crisis line (acts in the same principal as 911). It will connect with the National Suicide Prevention Hotline. HOWEVER, it will not become effective until sometime in 2022

VA WOMEN VETERAN HELP LINES...1-855-829-6636 or www.womenshealth.va.gov

The five signs of emotional suffering: PERSONALITY CHANGE, FEELING AGITATED, FEELING WITHDRAWN, POOR SELF-CARE AND FEELING HOPELESS.

If you are frequently in any one of those. PLEASE call one of the helplines listed above !

Want to stay current with VA & VFW issues? Go to vfwac@vfw.org and sign-up for “Action CORPS Weekly”.

Want to stay current with what is happening within the VFW in S.C.? Just go to VFWSC.org.

GET YOUR FLU SHOT !! 😊 😊 Why you are at it – Have you gotten a PNEUMONIA or SHINGLES shot. What about the COVID shot? How about the COVID Booster Shot?

Are you a veteran of Afghanistan? Or the family member of a veteran who served there? And you/they need some help. Contact 877 – WAR – VETS (877-927-8387). This is a 24/7 helpline.

******In 2021 there were more than 8,000, military-on-military, sexual assaults reported to DoD***

A SPECIAL “THANK YOU” TO EVERYONE IN THE SC VFW WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE OVER \$35,000 IN GOODS AND CASH TO THE KENTUCKY TORNADO RELIEF EFFORT. ANOTHER SPECIAL THANKS TO THE PERSONNEL WHO MADE THE DELIVERY TRIP!!

Commander’s Call – From Your State Commander - Comrades and Auxiliary Members,

I want to say thanks. We, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of South Carolina are having a great year and it is all do to the hard work and dedication of all the members of the Department of South Carolina.

As all of you should know, we are now in our election time of year. The Posts will elect their officers next month and the districts will elect as they have their conventions in the next 2 months. We,

all of us, must be mindful of the leadership that we are putting in place. We want these leaders to succeed and help grow our organization. We also need to help guide them to success with appropriate words at the appropriate time. We also need to support them as they continue to grow with the post and the district. I ask that we all do this and continue to build a stronger VFW by supporting and backing out elected leaders.

I ask for all to continue to work on Community Service. This is what we are here for locally. We need to inform our communities of what we can bring and do for our communities. "No One Does More for Veterans".

I can go on and on as most of you know. I just want to say thanks again for all your hard work with all that you do.

Yours in Comradeship,

Dwight Hora

"We Are Family"

From the Desk of Your Department Auxiliary President - The end of March is upon us, and I am looking forward to wrapping up a wonderful year and attending the National Convention. Just a couple of reminders and a last appeal to you all.

Our membership is 101.99% and I am over the moon at our recruiting ability! I am asking you all to contact your unpaid members if you haven't done so and if they are not interested in continuing their membership, ask them why. We need to know where we need improvement so we can stop members from choosing to do the same.

April, we hold nominations and elections (see section 804 of the By-Laws). Installation of offices (section 806) must not be more than 60 days prior to the Department Convention. Not before April 18, 2022. Please input your Installation Report to Malta and send a copy to the Department Secretary by the end of May. Delegates should be elected at the same time and dues sent to the Department Treasurer.

As we prepare for our Department Convention, I ask that you remember to go over your membership list and decess those you have lost. As of now we are showing a total of 64, I fear this number is low. Our members have served this organization well and we owe them tribute at our Memorial Service.

It has been my Honor to be your Department President and I thank YOU for making this a successful and exciting term of office for me.

God Bless and I love you all.

Kate



**State Sr. Vice Commander
Ed Stefanak Jr**

Comrades, the 2021-2022 VFW year is nearly 3 months from being over. I'm very proud to have served as State Sr. Vice Commander this year and I'm looking forward to advancing to become State Commander at our state convention in June. Let's finish this year out strong and go into the new VFW year locked, stocked and ready to rock.

Elections will be conducted over the next couple months. It's an exciting time for new leaders coming up through the ranks as well as leaders that are continuing on. I can't stress enough to the leaders going into the new year, that planning is everything. Take the time that you have until the changeover to lay down a good solid plan for the first few months of your administration. Plan post events, recruiting events, distributing Buddy Poppies and Community events. Success comes to those who plan ahead and set goals.

Lastly, I cannot express how crucial it is for Post Commander's and delegates to attend the State Convention. It's important that you get to know the candidates for each position. Also, good information gets put out as well as good training. I hope to see you all in June at the convention. Your hard work and dedication this year has been amazing!

From the Desk of the Jr. Vice-Commander – JIM FOX

Comrades and Auxiliary,
Before we know it, we will all be at the state convention to start a new administrative year. I had the opportunity to visit with many Post and District meetings this year.

I have witnessed many positive activities. From everyone coming together to help support Kentucky. To Posts doing tremendous amounts of community service and taking care of our own veterans.

I look forward to serving all of you for the rest of this administrative year and beyond.

IT'S ELECTION TIME – As this edition of the Sentinel hits the streets. **Posts** have had their initial nominating process and are preparing for their elections and who will lead them in the upcoming year. **Districts** will have their nominating process and elections during the District Conventions in April & May. The **State** is gearing up for their election process at the state convention in June. **WHERE DO YOU STAND IN THIS PROCESS?** Think you might have what it

takes to lead SC VFW in the future? There is state Junior Vice-Commander position coming open. It is the stepping-stone to becoming a State Commander! Interested?

Are you running for an office? Even if you never held an office before. Now might be the time for you take the leap and put your name in the hat to take a leadership role. There is plenty of means to provide you some of the training/position education you might want to be more comfortable in your sought after position. Even if you are not interested in an elected position. There are plenty of 'appointed' positions, especially at the state level

Are you thinking about running for an office? Are you new to a post, district, or the state and are not sure how you might fit in? The short, simple answer is. As a VFW card carrying member "in-good-standing", you qualify to run for ANY office.

Are you thinking of trying to get involved in a certain Committee or appointed position? But don't know how to go about it, or what might be involved? At the Post or District levels, just talk to the current Commander, Sr., or Jr. Vice and let them know of your interest. Appointed post and district officer positions and committee chairperson's is done by the newly elected commander.

The best way to find out about your position of interest is to get yourself (buy or borrow) a "current" PODIUM HANDBOOK. Within the Congressional Charter and By-Laws. It explains what positions are elected, what are appointed, the appointment of committee chairpersons. The basic responsibilities of the officers at every level (post, district, state) of leadership.
THIS BOOK IS THE BEST WAY TO LEARN ABOUT/UNDERSTAND THE VFW!

You did not throw your hat in the ring during the nominating process (post nominating), but still want to be considered for a leadership role! ANY member of the state 'in-good-standing' can run for any position, at any level, by: When the position to be voted on comes to the floor? The current commander, or election proctor, will ask "ARE THERE ANY NOMINATIONS FOR THE POSITION OF" or something to that effect. All you need to do is rise, be recognized, and say you wish to be considered for that position. The chair has to recognize you and place your name in nomination. The rest is up to the voting membership.

You might not win this year, but now members know you and now, they know you have an interest Good luck next year!

ELECTED POSITIONS ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING ORDER

AT THE POST LEVEL

Commander
Senior Vice-Commander
Junior Vice-Commander
Quartermaster
Chaplain
Trustees

AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

Commander
Senior Vice-Commander
Junior Vice-Commander
Quartermaster
Chaplain
Judge Advocate
Surgeon

Trustees

** Absentee ballots and Proxy votes are prohibited

**The state order of election is the same as district. The newly elected State Commander will appoint an Adjutant, Chief of Staff, Inspector, Service Officer and other officers as deemed necessary.

YOU DO THE MATH

The VFW has around 1.2 million members. Of that number, a little over 812,000 are LIFE MEMBERS. Most Post Annual Memberships range from \$35 to \$45 a year.

A Life membership at age 30 (and before) costs \$425, at age 80 costs \$170. At age 30, a one year installment plan requires a \$45 initial payment and 11 monthly payments of \$38.64 YOU, at age 30, are an annual dues paying (\$45 a year) member of YOUR post. When you reach age 80, you will have paid \$2,250 in annual fees. YOU do the math!

A Life Membership at age 51 costs \$335. From 51 to 80 you would have paid \$1,825. YOU do the math! YOUR installment plan would be \$45 initial and 11 monthly payments of \$30.45

YOU can upgrade to a Life Member or even a Legacy Life through your post or at msc@vfw.org
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR???

***In 2019 AAA Auto Service responded to more than **488,200** vehicles out of gas calls. Since when did reading a gas gauge in your vehicle get so difficult??
Courtesy of Triple AAA Magazine*

POST WEB SITES/EMAIL

In this day and age of electronic communications. It is distressing to see that only 1/3 of the state posts (24) have web pages listed on the state site. How many posts don't even have a post computer system for day to day post activity documentation? If each post took a poll of their membership. They would probably find that over 90%+ of their members have electronic communications means (computers). A web site is part of the modern means of making your post visible to the civilian world (opening you up to potential new members). Your post can showcase what your post is doing for veterans, their civilian community by way of a web site and your local news media. You can inform most of your membership by way of email's. Web sites do cost money to run. If your post doesn't have that money? At least look at having a Post Facebook page.

How does your membership know what is happening in their post? I once had a post commander in SC tell me, "If my members want to know what is happening at the post? They can come to the monthly meeting" (no consideration whatsoever for the 95% of the membership who didn't make the monthly meeting). What's wrong with establishing a master

email list of members that your post can use to inform membership of post activities (the monthly post events calendar, if you have one) and a brief summary of the post monthly business meeting? This way your post gets the word out to a minimum of over 90% of its membership. You can't make them read it, but you can put it there for them to read.

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Sentinels

*Have stood guard in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier **EVERY MINUTE** since 1937, with **NO** exception.

*A Sentinel's tour of duty generally lasts about 18 months.

*In 1996 the first Army female (Sgt. Heather Johnson) earned her "Tomb Guard" badge. Since then, there have only been five other females that have earned a badge.

PENDING LEGISLATION YOUR VFW SUPPORTS

Listed below are excerpts from a couple of the almost 100 bills before Congress that YOUR VFW supports. YOU can help YOUR VFW by sending a letter to your state representatives in the House and Senate.

NOTE: To see the full bill. Just enter the Bill # (EX: S.1296) in your search engine.

S. 1296, Daniel J. Harvey Jr. and Adam Lambert Improving Service Member Transition to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act

Service member and veteran suicide prevention continues to be a top priority for the VFW. Recent research indicates that suicide risk is increased after transition from the military. Additional research shows that risk is also heightened in individuals with mental health diagnoses. Accordingly, it is appropriate to educate and support transitioning service members with connections and resources to ensure risk factors are identified and care is given. The VFW supports this legislation, which would create a five-year pilot program to educate transitioning service members on reintegrating into civilian life and factors related to suicide risk. This pilot program would also facilitate a warm handoff of members to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which would include an initial appointment, a health assessment, and a tailored treatment plan that addresses medical conditions associated with heightened suicide risk.

S. 1664, Department of Veterans Affairs Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Processing Claims Improvement Act of 2021

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can occur after a person experiences or witnesses a traumatic event such as military sexual trauma (MST), combat, severe accident, natural disaster, and serious violence or injury. A veteran can file a disability benefit claim for PTSD as a service-connected injury. An Office of Inspector General (OIG) report from December 2020 indicated that sixteen percent of processed claims were not in accordance with VA regulations and procedures. The OIG recommended

training staff in the process of how to gather evidence and verify stressors required for PTSD claims, and to track results.

S. 2089, Burial Equity for Guards and Reserves Act of 2021

The VFW supports this legislation which would ensure that VA grants to state veteran cemeteries do not restrict states from burying veterans who served in the National Guard and Reserve with honorable discharges.

Currently, only certain veterans are eligible for burial at cemeteries managed by VA's National Cemetery Administration (NCA). This includes service members who died on active duty, those who served on active duty and received an other than dishonorable discharge, and those who served in the National Guard or Reserve for at least twenty years and received an other than dishonorable discharge. Service members of the National Guard and Reserve who serve for less than twenty years and have no time on active duty, even if discharged under honorable conditions, do not qualify.

Service members of the National Guard and Reserve, many of whom also have access to VA health care, education benefits, and VA home loan eligibility, should have the right to be buried in a state veterans cemetery. States that choose to broaden the eligibility of veterans beyond what the NCA currently allows should not be restricted from the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program.

NOTE: When you send a letter, make sure you send a copy to **DENTIST HARVIN**. Most importantly, make sure you send him a copy of any response you receive from Washington (when you send dentist the response, make sure you also include the original letter you wrote that generated the congressional response). AND make sure you do a Community Service Report.

IED'S & ALZHEIMERS

Not long ago. The Army conducted a study that showed a direct connection between service members exposed to IED'S or large explosions and them contracting Alzheimer's disease later in their life. It concluded that even if the service member was exposed to the shock wave of such an explosion, but did NOT receive a "traumatic brain injury" (TBI). That person is still at a higher risk of developing an irreversible brain disorder. Alzheimer's disease is the leading cause of dementia, or memory loss. Exposure to the blast leads to debilitating neurological damage.

It is estimated that between 2001 and 2012, 20% of the troops in the war zone were subjected to TBI. Exposure to blasts leads to debilitating neurological and psychological damage. This finding may explain why those individuals returning from war zones with no detectable brain injury still suffer from persistent neurological symptoms including depression, headaches, irritability and memory problems.

If you were ever subject to an IED, or large force explosion (even if you did not feel the effects of a shock-wave). You should see a VA or family doctor.

COURTESY OF: VFW Magazine

VFW Disciplinary Actions Nationwide – So far, this VFW year, there have been 38 posts placed under suspension and three posts have had their charter revoked nationwide according to the February National Council of Administration minutes. There are currently over 5,100 VFW Posts worldwide.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR STATE

Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen and Teacher Award Winners

PATRIOT'S PEN

1. **James R. Bowen**, 8th grader from Indian Land Middle School. Sponsored by **Post 12136** in District 5.
2. **Evan M. Williams** 8th grader from JET Middle School in Johnston. Sponsored by **Post 6932** in District 9.
3. **Nielle Tipan**, 8th grader from Saint Anthony Catholic School in Florence. Sponsored by **Post 3181** in District 6.

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

Winner: **Mary Grace Copeland**, a senior at Lexington High School. Sponsored by **Post 6561** in District 2

2nd Place: **Hannah Dawson** sponsored by **Post 5091**, District 1

3rd Place: **Aspen Hodges** sponsored by **Post 10601**, District 9

TEACHER

Grades K – 5th: - **Doretha Garland**, a 2nd Grade Teacher Philip Simmons Elementary School, Wando, South Carolina. Nominated by **Post 3137**, Isle of Palms, District 1

Grades 6th – 8th: - ***Tristin Padgett***, Batesburg-Leesville Middle School, Batesburg-Leesville, South Carolina. Nominated by Lake Murray **Post 6740**, Leesville District 2

(*ADVANCED TO NATIONAL COMPETITION)

Grades 9 – 12th: - **Michael R. Burgess**, River Bluff High School, Lexington, South Carolina. Nominated by Gandy-Griffin **Post 4262**, Columbia District 2

*****A SPECIAL THANK YOU** – To the District & Post Chairpersons & Committees who worked so diligently to put these nominating packages out into the schools and did all the follow-up items necessary to recognize the outstanding students and educators in our state.

CHAPLAIN'S & BURIAL AT A VA NATIONAL CEMETERY — The Department of Veterans Affairs' [National Chaplain Service](#) teams up with the [Civil Air Patrol Chaplain Corps](#) to expand Veterans' families access to qualified faith leaders during committal and memorial services held at [VA cemeteries](#).

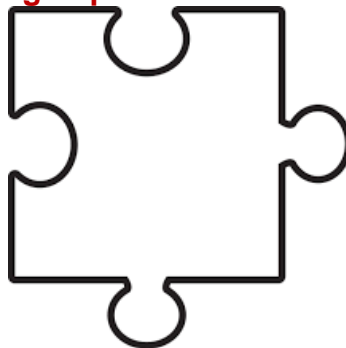
VA's National Chaplain Service provides administrative support, training and other services to assist CAP in supporting VA national cemeteries and providing chaplain coverage when a VA chaplain is not available.

"The partnership, implemented in December 2021, came about from increased requests from family members asking for chaplain support during burial services at NCA cemeteries," said VA Chaplain Program Manager for Family Care and Bereavement Chad Maxey. "Working with Civil Air Patrol expands our ability to provide trained chaplains, whether from VA or CAP, to Veterans' families when they need it most." Every VA Medical Center has chaplain services available to Veterans and their families that represent a broad spectrum of religious traditions. Family members of Veterans may request chaplain support through their [local VA](#) Chaplain Service Office when scheduling a burial.

"Our chaplains stand ready to help families honor the memory and legacy of their loved ones," said Civil Air Patrol National Commander Maj. Gen. Edward D. Phelka. "We look forward to working with VA in support of this noble mission."

In 2021, VA's National Cemetery Administration conducted more than **150,000 burials**, an all-time high dating back to its establishment in 1973. For more information on VA support services, [burials](#) and memorials, visit VA's [National Cemetery Administration](#).

YOU are an integral piece of the SC VFW & Auxiliary



DO ALL YOU CAN TO HELP YOUR STATE THRIVE

QUARtermasters AND TRUSTEES

The elections will soon be over and many of you posts will have elected a new Quartermaster and Trustees. Now, how do you train them properly? The Department of SC has made this a simple process.

Go to VFWSC.org, click on, scroll over to RESOURCES, click on, scroll down to QUARTERMASTER RESOURCES, click on. It will now give the following QM training information:

- *The Online Membership System and how to use it
- *VFW Requirements for Bonding
- *Employee & Officer Bonding Forms and Fee Schedules
- *The Quartermaster schedule of Financial & Administrative requirements during the year
- *Quartermaster and Trustee Training Slides

NOTE” Every year the state VFW will provide a QM & Trustee training program at state headquarters. EVERY POST should make the effort to get their new Quartermaster and Trustees to this, one day, training session.

GUESTS AT MEETINGS

How many of you post's do not allow guests to attend a post meeting? How many posts require outside speakers to present their cause/initiative before or after a regular business meeting? How many posts do not allow an eligible veteran to attend a post meeting until AFTER they have joined the VFW/Post (we want you to be a post member, but you can't see what we're doing until after you join). NOT a good recruiting tool?

SECTION 203 of the NATIONAL BYLAWS – Allows a Post Commander to approve guests attending a post meeting. This opens the door for you to bring a perspective member to a meeting so they can see what the VFW and your post is all about. It opens the door for individuals, groups or organizations to get a first-hand look at what your post is all about and maybe encourages them to support your post causes/veterans programs.

Conversely, SECTION 403 (Districts) – Makes no allowance for guests to attend any type of 'members only' District meeting.

VA - VETERAN STUDENT INFORMATION

A couple of years ago – I reported that the VA had suspended VA funding and support to some colleges and universities because of various deceptive practices. This effected the continuing education of over 16,000 veterans enrolled in these universities. Just recently, the VA lifted those bans and sanctions to five universities because they corrected their deceptive practices (on paper) and now supposedly meet all VA requirements; The University of Phoenix (had more veterans enrolled than any other school at a cost of over \$150+ million), Colorado Technical University, American InterContinental University, Bellevue University and Temple University have all been welcomed back by the VA.

When the initial ban was announced. There were 35 schools identified in the ban. The VA has not publically named the other 30.

VETERANS AFFAIRS VOLUNTEER SERVICE & SC VFW

Your State Surgeon Bailey Bryant heads a group of SC VFW volunteers who service the needs of the 13 VA hospitals and clinics in SC. This group is known as Veterans Affairs Volunteer Services (VAVS). Their primary job is to see that the VA facility they represent is adequately manned with volunteers.

A VA facility is greatly hampered in its ability to help veterans and perform all necessary services within the facility if it does not have an adequate volunteer force. Be it a Hospital or Clinic. You, as the VAVS coordinator, can help your facility continue to provide necessary services by finding VFW or Auxiliary volunteers, at your post, or a nearby post, to work a couple hours a month..

Every VA Hospital or Clinic has a Volunteer Services office. If you would like to be a SC VFW VAVS representative? Contact that office and they will tell you what to do and provide you with a volunteer application.

At my designated VA Clinic. I help with food, clothes, house-hold and personal goods drives when my VA Clinic tells me they are having a hard time securing these items for their veterans in need. You DON'T need to be a VAVS volunteer to do this. Just check with your local VA facility volunteer services office and see what they need (they always need something for veterans).

WANT TO GET INVOLVED? Along with contacting your local VA facility. Contact BAILEY BRYANT at baileybrant69@gmail.com. He is home-based at Post 8738 in District 2. He currently has volunteer openings at the BEAUFORT & SUMTER VA facilities.

PS: Whenever you do anything for a VA facility. Make sure you fill out a Community Service Report for your Post and the State.

POLITICS, the VFW and YOU

VFW Involvement in Elections and Political Activities VFW members can make a difference in any election by getting involved in the political process. Hold voter registration drives, town hall meetings, and other events featuring candidates for public office. Veterans are a strong voting bloc and a constituency that most candidates want on their side. As we approach the next election cycle, here are a few items to keep mind as you get involved and attend or host candidate functions and town hall meetings:

DO's

- Do attend candidate town hall meetings and other events and ask candidates where they stand on our issues.
- Do set up voter registration drives /Get Out the Vote Campaigns on the local level.

- Do provide carpool service on Election Day to help the elderly and disabled get to the voting booth.
- Do support and work for your favorite candidates as an individual voting constituent.
- Do wear your VFW cap at public events such as town halls, rallies, forums, or debates.

DON'Ts

- Don't endorse candidates on behalf of the VFW National Organization, Department, District or Post.
- Don't wear your VFW cap when actively campaigning for a candidate, such as soliciting donations or knocking on doors asking people to pledge their vote for a candidate.

The key is to stay informed on veterans' issues and use your influence to urge new candidates and those up for reelection to support veterans. It does not matter which candidates you support as long as they know you are a VFW member and are concerned about your fellow veterans, service members, and their families. For more information on how to get involved, read the VFW's Veterans Vote brochure. Stay informed by reviewing the VFW's Legislative Priority Goals. If you have questions, please contact the VFW at vfwac@vfw.org.

POST COMMANDERS – When you have a member upgrade to a LIFE Membership or a LEGACY LIFE Membership. Please let me know who it is so I can give them a 'Thank You' in the newsletter.

POST 10804 – Welcome new Life Members **Brian Ziegler, Keith Harrinton, Brian Vettes**

FEMALE VETERANS – Are you one of the estimated 20,000+ female veterans NOT using VA services? If so, the VA and Center for Women Veterans would like to know why? Please complete the anonymous five (5) minute survey, or share your thoughts with the VA at dav.la/30g

MID-WINTER CONFERENCE FEB 17 -20

The conference started on Thursday for some with YOUR State Commander taking National Representative, Jr. Vice-Commander-in-Chief, Duane Sarmiento to visit Posts 3137 & 8346. YOUR Auxiliary President and National Representative from District 9 Council, Janice Holm's joined them at Post 8346.

FRIDAY'S activities included meetings and briefings that included Budget & Finance Committee, VFW DSO Claims with the State VSO Officer, Protocol and Leadership.

FRIDAY NIGHT main event was the "BROWN BAG" auction which raised \$1,835 for Fisher House and a dance afterwards.

SATURDAY was down-to-business day which started with a District Commander breakfast meeting. Next came the Council of Administration meeting with each member of the CoFA providing a mini briefing on their area of responsibility. Each activity Chairperson was also given

the opportunity to brief. As was each of our national representatives and the representative for the COOTIES.

COOTIES – Erick Rothering reported the state has 204 COOTIES, 6 Pup Tents and is looking for anyone who likes to visit ailing veterans in medical facilities, or their homes.

*The council declined a second on a motion for a proposed budget item change. Ending that issue.

*There were no issues of significant importance discussed by the CofA

*There were some awards presented and they are listed below.

*Mark Winn – National Home for Children Trustee gave an update on the home and activities.

*The meeting ended with numerous candidates for office (state and national) announcing their intentions to run.

After lunch, PSC Rodney Burne gave a very informative presentation on “Understanding Elections”. Of particular interest was delegates and how they apply to District & State elections. Assisting in the presentation was Jr. Vice-Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento.

South Carolina can’t throw a party without inviting the FIRE DEPARTMENT!!! For the second conference in a row (1st being the Southern Conference 1AM fire), we had to evacuate the conference site (everyone was just starting to arrive for the dinner) and head outdoors. There we stayed for almost an hour-and-a-half. A fire in the electrical system in the laundry room being the culprit. Fortunately no one was hurt, but we did have a few people with a big smoke problem in their room and on all their possessions.



Once back inside, there were several changes to the planned agenda, but all went smoothly with VOD/PP/Teacher awards and speeches being given. The two National Representatives gave their speeches and shortly thereafter the night was over. Then off to the Hospitality Suite!

SUNDAY: For the first time, there was no planned meeting activity for the general membership. The only business was the Past State Commander’s Breakfast.

****DISTRICT 1 did an admirable job in holding/hosting a very popular Hospitality Room****

VOICE of DEMOCRACY, PATRIOT’S PEN, TEACHER AWARDEES



James R. Bowen, Indian Land Middle School. Sponsored by Post 12136



Mary Grace Copeland, our State Voice of Democracy winner. A senior at Lexington High School. Sponsored by Post 6561



Doretha Garland, 2nd Grade, Philip Simmons Elementary School, Wando, SC
Nominated by Post 3137,



Michael Burgess, History, River Bluff High School, Lexington, SC
Nominated by Post 4262



**Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award
VFW Dept. of SC First Place:**

Tristin Padgett, Special Education, Batesburg-Leesville Middle School
Nominated by Post 6740



Nielle Tipan, 8th grade St. Anthony Catholic School Florence. Sponsored by Post 3181
Evan M. Williams, 8th grade, JET Middle School Johnston. Sponsored by Post 6932

OTHER AWARDS GIVEN to POST REPRESENTATIVES

Web Site Award: Post 3137 Isle of Palms

Best Post Newsletter: Post 12102, Colleton County

Honorable Mention Certificates: Post 445, Post 3433, Post 10804

Life Saving and Safety Awards:

*Post 12102 - Life Saving Award: Captain Raymond Colson, Cottageville Police Department

*Post 8738 - EMT Lieutenant Brittany Rininger, Lexington County EMS

*Post 8738 - 911 Dispatcher, Jayme Riehle, Lexington County 911 Communications Officer

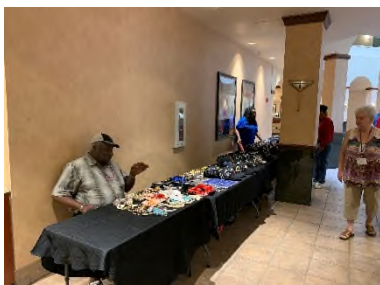
*Post 8738 - Law Enforcement, Master Deputy Nicholas Huffstetler, Lexington County Sheriff's Office

*Post 6740 - Firefighter, Assistant Chief John D. Gall, Batesburg-Leesville Fire Department



AROUND THE FEB 2022 MID-WINTER CONFERENCE

Vendors



Grand tour of the Headquarters



Around the Conference



DOES YOUR POST WANT TO HELP IN YOUR COMMUNITY, BUT DOES NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO DO SO? Think VFW GRANTS !!

VFW Grants can provide you monies to help support/finance a veteran or community project.

*Does your local VA Hospital or Clinic have a food-bank that provides food to veterans under the United To Combat Hunger (UTCH) program and they are need of non-perishable food items? The VFW has Grant monies to help you help the VA.

*Does your local emergency services or police department have a need for items/equipment to support the safety of your local community? The VFW has a Grant for that.

The simple thing for your POST to do (these grants are NOT available for districts or state) is to go to WWW.VFW.ORG/GRANTS and this site will tell you everything that is available in grant monies AND it provides your post the necessary forms to complete your request. Most grant request are answered within two weeks.

*GRANTS come from monies donated to the VFW. There is NOT an unlimited supply of funding. So the sooner you submit your grant, the better your chance of getting it approved.

PERSONAL NOTE: Since November, I have written two grant request to VFW National for two different projects our post was/is involved in. They were both approved.

STARTING A VFW POST

What do you do, as a VFW member, when it's a very long drive to the nearest VFW Post, or the VFW Posts around you start consolidating because of low membership numbers and you don't want to drive long distances to get to another post just to be able to be a member of a post and be VFW active?

YOU CAN START A NEW POST! That's exactly what Anita Wilson did back in 2021 and she filled that lack of a VFW presence in Boiling Springs in the Foothills of South Carolina.

*To start a new post, you first must have a need, so Anita scoured the streets of her area of the Foothills and found enough veterans (some already VFW members and some, not) interested. The majority liked her plan for a 'local' VFW Post.

*You need a place to meet monthly. She found the Upstate Family Resource Center (an organization that does great things for civilians and veterans in need). They offered her their cafeteria for free.

*Next, you go out and recruit. To start a new post, VFW requires 25 members. A minimum of 10 new members and 15 transfers/reinstated (from other posts, or state members at large list). This Commander Wilson (yes, she was elected commander of her new post) has done exceptionally well.

*Get help from the state VFW. There is a VFW new post startup package which she received from state leadership. This package also includes writing the charter for the new post. The charter which must be approved by VFW National. The Charter contains

the names of the original members of the post, so this is an important historical (in VFW terms) document.



Commander Wilson and her **“NEW POST”, 12207 Boiling Springs**, leadership being sworn in by then State Commander Ted Tufts

*Once your Charter has been approved/signed, hold your initial elections. All mandatory elected positions **MUST BE** filled. So, it's important that a significant number of new post members step-up and take on a leadership responsibility.

*Don't stop recruiting!

A little about Commander Wilson:

+She served in the Army for 30 years, earning her VFW eligibility by way of assignments to Kuwait, Iran and Afghanistan. She retired, as an E-8, with her last Army job being that of a First Sergeant. She has been a member of the VFW since 2010. As of the end of February, Post 12207 has 56 members. When I talked to her on Saturday 26 February, Commander Wilson had just recruited two new members. Sadly, she has lost three members who have passed on since the post first started.

Commander Wilson stated that it has been the hard work and dedication of the post members that has helped the post grow and thrive. Post 12207 is very active in community and VFW projects. It is an “Early-Bird” Post. It completed all of the All State and All American eligibility requirements by December 31st. This is quite an accomplishment for a brand-new post!! Commander Wilson believes that a post does not need large membership numbers to survive and possibly thrive. A small cadre of dedicated workers willing to do that necessary to keep a post healthy is more important than a 500 member post that never sees those that make up that membership!

GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM MEMORIAL – Update

Back in 2017, when Donald Trump was President. He signed into the law the Global War on Terrorism Act which exempted the GWOT from the 10 year wait until after a conflict is over before you can build a memorial.

Within President Biden's 2022 National Defense Authorization Act is an authorization for a GWOT memorial to be built on the National Mall. A location and funding has not yet been determined.

This memorial honors the 2.7 million troops that have served since Sep. 2001 and the 7,052 troops that have been killed since that date.

THE MEDIA CAN BE YOUR POST'S BEST FRIEND



This is Post 10804 and District 7 Commander Mike Mishoe and me (Bill La Monte) doing a TV interview for WMBF TV back in late February. WMBF was doing a story on me, about veterans still serving after military service. It is the VFW program #StillServing! The story ran the whole weekend, Fri-Sun and was a great promotion for our post.

A HOME MORTGAGE Do I do 30 years or 15 years

This is the dilemma that has haunted home buyers for as long as the home mortgage business has been in effect.

15 Years – You pay off your mortgage a lot sooner with bigger monthly payments and pay less interest over the course of the loan. EXAMPLE: a \$200,000 mortgage at 4% Interest will require a monthly payment of \$1,530. You have paid \$75,000+ in interest payments at the end of 15 years.

30 Years – Smaller monthly payments but a lot more in interest paid. EXAMPLE: Same loan, same interest. You pay \$1,013 in monthly payments and you pay \$164,500 in interest. Remember, this is only for financing \$200,000, as an example. It does NOT take into account actual selling price and down-payment requirements.

*If you can 'easily' afford the 15 year monthly payment, that is the obvious way to go.

*The 30 year monthly payment, being over \$425 less, allows for a lot more flexibility in your monthly living expenses. This is great for those on a tighter budget.

Alright, so you can't afford the 15 year mortgage, but you have extra monthly cash to work with. If you religiously put \$150 a month against your principal (an additional monthly payment). You could reduce your \$164,000 in interest paid to around \$80,000 AND pay off your 30 year mortgage in about 19-20 years. Saving you about 10 years of \$1,013 a month payments.

Even if you can't make every month payments (on either mortgage time-line). Any extra payments (against the principal) will save you thousands of \$ in the end.

Some mortgage companies allow a PLAN –C. This is making mortgage payments every TWO weeks. This also will drastically reduce your end of mortgage payment amount.

Remember this also; as an “older” veteran, a mortgage lender cannot deny you a mortgage based on your age. Based on the sample of borrowing \$200,000, the mortgage lender CAN require you to have a yearly income of over \$60,000 to make you eligible for the loan.

Did you receive a gift card over the holidays that you have not yet used? – Odds are, you probably won’t use that card. Why not put it to good use and donate it to your local VA Volunteer Services office, any EMS organization, an EMS person (just walk up and give it to that fireman, policeman, ambulance driver, etc). They will all love you for it. You can even use it as some sort of gift/prize at any of YOUR post activities.

Remember, if you donate that card? Make sure you fill out a community service report and get YOUR post the credit for a good deed!
OVER 1.2 BILLION \$ in gift cards go unused each year!!

HOW INVOLVED ARE YOU WITH YOUR POST??



Age is no excuse – for not attending post meetings or participating in post functions! Pictured above is **102 Year Old** WW II veteran and VFW member Bill Jagoe, a member of a VFW post in

NY, who now calls Post 10804 home. Picture 1 is Bill receiving his VFW 100th Birthday Certificate from past commander Ted Tufts, Picture 2 is Bill receiving a Quilt of Valor at age 100 at Post 10804, Picture 3 is Bill participating with Post 10804 in the N. Myrtle Beach St. Patricks Day Parade Picture 4 (hidden by pole on left is Bill attending a VFW/American Legion Memorial Day Ceremony, Picture 5 is Bill with a Boy Scout Troop in front of a new flagpole installed by an Eagle Scout candidate. Bill is a regular attendee at Post 10804 monthly meetings, special meal events, the 2nd Sunday of the month Post Brunch and just recently, he participated with Post 10804 in the town St. Patrick's Day Parade after recently celebrating his **102nd birthday**. **Bill is there for our post functions. Where are you for your's?**

REMEMBERING PAST STATE COMMANDER JOHN DAVID MELLERT

A large gathering of Comrades and Auxiliary attended the memorial today (3/9/22) of an amazing VFW State Commander, John David Mellert. Born in Phillipsburg, NJ in 1940, Comrade Mellert spent the majority of his life serving family and his country; in addition to serving in the Air Force, he was a proud American who donated many hours to mentoring youth (helping Boy Scouts become Eagle Scouts, and tutoring students in reading, writing and values). He was a loving husband and devoted father, who was a blessing to the VFW and the VFW Department of SC.



Many joyful memories were shared today, as family and friends united at VFW Post 3433: thank you to the leadership for hosting this event, thank you to the dedicated team who prepared a delicious meal for us to enjoy, but most importantly, thank you to everyone who attended this memorial and Celebration of Life for a very deserving Comrade.

RIP Comrade Mellert, you will be missed by many





Photo 1: State Chaplains past & present

Photo 2: Past State Commanders

Photo 3: Celebration of Life amazing food prep crew

Photo 4: Mr & Mrs Rodney Burne, Betty Hilliard, Hugh Gunter

Photo 5: Past State Commanders at Post 3433

Photo 6: Sr Vicee-Commander Ed Stefanak Jr. with Mrs. David Mellert

THANK YOU GINGER GRAHAM FOR THIS!

LAKE MURRAY POST 6740 HONORS “102 YEAR OLD” WW II VETERAN

The past few days have been remarkable: in less than one week I've been introduced to four WWII veterans! Today I was blessed to meet 102 year old Mr. John Daniel Harmon, Sr., who drove an ambulance during the war. He shared a story about the ambulance he drove, "I got a Dear John letter when I was in Europe; I had her name painted on my ambulance, so I had to repaint the vehicle with "rebel" to remove her name."

We are are grateful to Mr. Harmon's family, who reached out to Lake Murray VFW 6740 in the hopes of honoring him (it is the 80th anniversary of the day he was inducted into the military at Ft Jackson). In attendance were many family members, the Honorable

Cal Forrest, as well as dedicated members of Lake Murray VFW 6740 and VFW 6740 Auxiliary. Proclamations from the Honorable Cal Forrest (SC House District #39) and the Honorable Ronnie Cromer (SC Senate District #18) were read and presented to Mr. Harmon.

I am thankful for Cdr Don Watson, Sr Vice Cdr Charles Holloway , Quartermaster Gary Landry , Chaplain Terry Lee Campbell Sr. , President Maxine Caughman and Auxiliary Chaplain Bob Caughman, who each played a role in honoring this living legend.



Picture 1; Sr. Vice-Commander Charles Holloway welcoming Mr. Harmon

Picture 2; WW II Veteran John Harmon Sr. meeting SC District 39 House Representative Cal Forrest

Picture 3; Post 6740 Sr Vice Charles Holloway, Commander Don Watson, Past Commander Ginger Graham meeting Representative Forrest

Picture 4; Some of the Harmon family with Representative Forrest

Story & photos by Ginger Graham

WHO'S RUNNING THE SHOW ??

It's your **District** meeting and or Convention and your District Commander, Sr. Vice & Jr. Vice are NO SHOWS. What happens next? You cancel the meeting and everyone goes home! **WRONG!** The eligible attendees elect a **COMMANDER PRO-TEMPORE** (a temporary commander) who presides over the meeting and the meeting goes on. This meeting is an official meeting!
Manual of Procedure, Article IV, Section 418(a)(4)

THE VA and WOMEN IN SMALL BUSINESS

The VA recently concluded its initial **VetBizLadyStart** program which is part of the VA's - [Women Veteran-Owned Small Business Initiative](#) paving a way for [their future in the federal marketplace](#). The inaugural 14-week program, completed in early February, provided women transitioning out of the military, tools and resources to manage and grow their small businesses in government contracting. VA Chief of Staff Tanya Bradsher attended the ceremony and commended the program that brings results for our women Veterans, who in turn can use these tools to become successful business contractors, bringing opportunities back to those in their communities."

According to the Small Business Administration, [only 15% out of 2.5 million](#) Veteran-owned business are owned by women Veterans. The Women Veteran-Owned Small Business Initiative, part of VA's [Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization](#), is focused on using VetBizLadyStart to increase awareness of opportunities for women-owned small businesses to increase these numbers. VetBizLadyStart is a federally funded program and collaborates with the Women's Business Centers of the [District of Columbia, Maryland](#) and Virginia's [Old Dominion University](#). Entrepreneurship programs are offered through each organization to assist women in preparing for procurement.

For more information, or to possibly sign up for future training, go to [VA.gov](#)

EDITOR'S NOTE: This program is currently only for women who are transitioning/recently transitioned out of the military. For you 'seasoned' women veterans who want to get into the small business world. It might behoove you to petition the VA to expand this program to cover ALL women veterans who want to be small business owners.

****One of the fastest growing woman owned/operated businesses is the over-the-road trucking industry. There are over 240,000 licensed women truck-drivers and the number grows larger every year.*

BURN PIT REGISTRY – The VFW wants ALL veterans who served in the below listed overseas operations, to join the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry:

*Operation Desert Storm

*Operation Desert Shield

*Operation New Dawn

*Operation Iraqi Freedom

*Operation Enduring Freedom

To register go to: www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp

SOME IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES:

APRIL 1 & 2: - Cooties Grand Scratch

APRIL 9: - Come to state headquarters and see how YOUR legislative team works for the betterment of the SC VFW. Council of Administration meeting starting at 10AM.

APRIL 16: - Department Presidents Homecoming at state HQ starting 1PM

APRIL 23: - District 2 Convention 10AM

District 6 Convention Noon
District 7 Convention 10AM
District 9 Convention 11AM

APRIL 30: - District 9 Convention 10AM

All Audits due at HQ

MAY 1: - Loyalty Day, Posts, make sure you do a program and get it on the books

MAY 7: - District 5 Convention 9AM

MAY 14: - District 4 Convention 1PM

MAY 31: - Last day for posts to pay 'delegates dues' so your post is eligible to vote at the state elections

JUNE 10-11-12: -Cooties Grand Convention

JUNE 16-17-18-19: - **STATE CONVENTION** – Be there to support YOUR SC VFW

JUNE 20: - A new-year starts for the SC VFW and the opportunity for great things to happen – begins!!!

MARCH 25th – Is **Medal of Honor Day!** To date, 3,530 Medals of Honor have been awarded. Doctor Mary Walker is the only female recipient of the award. She earned her medal during the Civil War. Let's hope there's no need for anymore else to earn this medal in the future!!

SATURDAY MAY 7th – Is National VFW Community Service Day – What are you or your post doing to support this worthy cause??

MARCH 29th is a salute to **VIETNAM VETERANS DAY** – Many posts and communities throughout the state conducted events honoring their Vietnam Veterans. Below is a little pictorial on how State HQ honored our Vietnam Veterans





THANKS!! GINGER GRAHAM

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