

CHECKPOINT

NEWS FROM VFW'S FRONT LINES

Crowds Converge on Community Center

Oklahoma Vet Helps 'Thousands' File VA Claims

PHOTOS BY KELLY VON LUNEN



Left: Glenn Parker (right), a Veterans Corner volunteer, assists a local veteran with filing a VA medical claim. **Top Right:** Dale Graham, a Vietnam veteran, founded Veterans Corner. He continues to help fellow veterans file claims each week. **Bottom Right:** Mary Bolding explains widow's benefits to Deborah Ritter. Ritter's husband was wounded in Vietnam.

ROBERT BOVEE MET DALE GRAHAM in April 2009. For Bovee, the meeting was the beginning of a newfound passion for helping fellow vets.

"During our meeting, Dale found out I was in the service and noticed that I had difficulty hearing him," Bovee said. "He invited me to the Veterans Corner for assistance in filing a claim for hearing loss and tinnitus."

Bovee says he was amazed by what he saw that next Thursday morning. The Goldsby (Oklahoma) Community Center was full of veterans waiting for assistance.

"I waited my turn and was seen by a volunteer about two hours later," Bovee said. "Dale's knowledge and willingness to assist has enabled me to receive a disability rating of 60%. I am now going back to school and receive VA educational benefits under Chapter 31 (Montgomery GI Bill)."

Bovee was so amazed by this volunteer service for veterans, widows and families that he decided he wanted to be a part of it. Bovee, who served in the Army from 1985-87 in field artillery, now volunteers with the Veterans Corner and maintains www.veteranscorner.org.

"I had a website up and running within four months," Bovee said. "We are now able to reach people all over the country and provide assistance to those deserving

veterans, as well as the ones in our local community. I have received e-mails from veterans from Hawaii, California, Nevada, Florida, Alabama and New York."

Bovee's wife, 16-year-old daughter and 15-year-old son also volunteer for Veterans Corner.

'VFW IS THE BEST ONE'

Veterans Corner operates with 42 volunteers who have varying amounts of training and expertise. For example, Shirley Clark-Cowdin works with five to 10 widows each week. Her own husband, a Vietnam veteran, died at age 63 from complications due to Agent Orange exposure.

It is a condition Graham knows well. "We try to help those who are still alive and we help their widows," said Graham, a member of Post 4890 in Norman, Okla. "I think we do a pretty good job."

In the last five years, Veterans Corner has assisted as many as 198 people in one day. As of mid-September, volunteers had helped 150 veterans receive 100% disability ratings from VA in 2011 alone.

Graham has worked with multiple veterans service organizations but asserts that "VFW is the best one." All Veterans Corner claims are filed through the VFW

service office in Muskogee, Okla. Graham says of his fellow members: "If you're a VFW member, you've been there."

Veterans Corner also operates what Graham calls a benevolence fund for local veterans and their families. "People give us money as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, but nobody gets paid, period," the Vietnam vet explained. "We give that money away after we pay our expenses. We probably gave away \$40,000 last year."

Graham retired from Tinker Air Force Base in 2002 and has been helping veterans file VA claims since then. He started Veterans Corner in the garage of his home and moved to the community center when the operation became too large. Once a week, volunteers set up Veterans Corner starting at 7:30 a.m. They unload a 24-foot trailer full of tables, copiers and supplies. By 8 a.m., veterans and widows who have been waiting for hours can finally get in.

"All I wanted to do is have a little fun and help some folks," he said. "So far it's worked like we want it to. That's what it's all about, making a difference to these people. I personally believe that we've made a difference in thousands of people's lives."

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Here's the latest list of WWII vets who remain active in official roles at their Posts.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

PREPARE NOW FOR PUBLICATIONS CONTEST

Departments should prepare now for their statewide publications contests or at least have a process for determining which publications to submit.

The deadline for entries in the 2012 VFW National Publications Contest is April 2, 2012, and Department adjutants must submit entries for the contest. For instance, a Post newsletter editor cannot directly submit an entry to VFW National Headquarters.

A maximum of three Post entries per Department is allowed (one small, one medium and one large). Entries received from anyone other than the Department adjutant will be immediately disqualified.

The packet for the 2012 VFW National Publications Contest will be mailed to all Department adjutants and newspaper editors on Jan. 3, 2012.

If you require further information before then, contact:

VFW Publications Contest
406 W. 34th Street, Ste. 526
Kansas City, MO 64111
(816) 968-1113

E-mail: kgibson@vfw.org

HELUVA GOOD! DONATES \$10,000

VFW Foundation received a \$10,000 donation from Heluva Good! in support of the **Salute to Military Fathers**

Fathers Day program in June 2011. Heluva Good!, known for its sour cream dips, cheeses and condiments, presented the donation at the "Heluva Good! Sour

Cream Dips 400" NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Race.

VFW Foundation's **Return the Favor** program made it possible for 300 military guests to attend the race.

VFW Foundation took part in another race on Aug. 20. The NASCAR Camping World Truck Series VFW 200 raised awareness for the **Return the Favor** campaign, which honors, celebrates and supports active-duty military members, veterans and their families.



VFW OFFERS TRICARE HELP

Through VFW you have access to a **Tricare Supplement plan** that's designed to help cover costs not paid by Tricare.

Tricare is a health care program through the Department of Defense military health system. It provides civilian health benefits for military personnel, military retirees and their dependents, including some reservists.

Even though Tricare pays a generous share of civilian medical bills, your cost might be substantial, depending on which plan option you select. Tricare supplemental policies are designed to help cover and reimburse patients for their portion of civilian medical bills after Tricare pays the government's share, including coinsurance and deductibles.

The VFW-sponsored Tricare plan provides attractive benefits to help you manage your health care costs. There is no medical exam and flexible billing options are available.

To request a free Tricare information kit and enrollment form, call **1-800-821-2606, option 1**.

HOLIDAY MAILING DEADLINES APPROACHING

If your Post is sending care packages and well-wishes to troops overseas, be sure to note the mailing deadlines to reach servicemembers by the holidays:

Parcel Post: Nov. 12

Space Available Mail: Nov. 26

First-Class Letters and Cards: Dec. 3

Priority Mail: Dec. 3

Parcel Airlift Mail: Dec. 1

Express Mail: Dec. 17

LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES

Allen "Gunner" Kent, Adjutant General

Members Can Access Resolutions Online

ALL VFW MEMBERS can now obtain resolutions and bylaw amendments approved at the latest VFW national convention. By creating an account at VFW's website—www.vfw.org—with a valid member number, our members can know exactly where the organization stands on a multitude of issues.

Once on the home page, simply click "Login" to get started. Then click "Create an Account." You will need to supply your name, member number, e-mail address and establish a password. At that point you will be logged on to "My VFW," and you can access approved bylaw amendments and resolutions.

Resolutions define VFW's official position on issues that affect all veterans. Our bylaws, on the other hand, deal with strictly internal VFW matters, such as selecting new officers and rules for disciplinary actions.

During two days of deliberation in San Antonio at the 112th National Convention, delegates considered 96 resolutions and 51 amendments to our bylaws and *Manual of Procedure*. After debating the issues, they

approved 74 resolutions and 24 amendments.

The majority of the resolutions pertained to Veterans Service topics. A total of 47 were introduced, of which 40 were approved.

National Security and Foreign Affairs issues were the basis for 35 resolutions. The vast majority, 31, were approved.

Nine general resolutions, dealing with issues like VFW's support for adopting the Girl Scouts as a youth activity, were introduced. Three were approved.

All five resolutions regarding VFW's finances and internal organization were rejected in favor of approving bylaw amendment *B-1*, which will institute "subscription dues" no later than January 2014.

All members should know that proposed resolutions and bylaws can originate at all levels of the organization. If approved at Department conventions, they are then considered at the national convention.

Once approved at the national convention—VFW's supreme governing body—they become the organization's "marching orders" for the upcoming year.



Larry Maher, Quartermaster General

Send Election Reports Electronically

SINCE VFW'S NEW WEBSITE LAUNCHED at www.vfw.org we have had considerable growth in the number of people using our systems. The most active group of users continues to be our Post quartermasters.

There are about 7,500 VFW Posts and some 5,300 of those Post quartermasters actively use the system. This represents about 71% of our Posts.

Member usage continues to also grow. There are more than 120,000 active accounts or about 8.6% of the total membership. On the surface this does not seem to be a large percentage but the more transactions members can process by themselves, the greater the reduction in the amount of work the Post quartermaster is required to do on their behalf.

We have launched several new applications that have been well received by quartermasters. The *Online Election Report* (OER) capability was introduced earlier this year, enabling a Post or Department quartermaster to submit electronic versions of their election reports.

Another new feature is the automation of the National Convention Registration. This allows both members and quartermasters to register attendees to VFW's National Convention.

We also introduced the *Men's Auxiliary Online Membership System* for those Departments on the national plan.



Furthermore, the new *Officer Change Notification* application provides the quartermaster with the ability to interactively submit officer change information daily. Previously, these changes would either have been telephoned into National Headquarters or printed and sent through the mail.

If you don't have an online account and would like to create one so you can begin to use these exciting new applications, you can create one at any time by clicking "Login" in the upper right hand section of the website and then click "Create an Account."

So, please take the first steps to get going and should you require assistance along the way, you can always contact our helpline at **1-800-963-3180** or e-mail us at oms@vfw.org.

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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Internet address: www.vfwmagazine.org

Annual subscription rate: \$6
© November / December 2011



Michigan Post Donates \$8,500 for Memorial to Sailors Buried at Sea



PHOTO COURTESY ERNIE BAKER

Joseph Zikewich presents a check for \$8,500 to Joe Mastromatteo on July 28 to help pay for the wall behind the Peacoat Monument at Orion Veterans Memorial Park in Michigan. Post 334 collected the money specifically for this purpose.

JOSEPH ZIKEWICH WAS NOT YET 20 years old when he witnessed a Japanese kamikaze plane crash into the *USS Lexington*, on which he was serving. The attack on Nov. 5, 1944, killed 47 sailors in the South Pacific off Luzon Island. The incident left a lifelong impact on Zikewich.

"When you're a young fellow standing on the hangar deck having this burial ceremony at sea, realizing that mothers and fathers and families are not knowing where their sons are being buried, it kind of gets the best of you," Zikewich told *The Oakland Press*.

So Zikewich started the Peacoat Monument after his discharge in December 1945. "I thought about this day after day after day," he said. "It's become an obsession of mine that they deserved recognition."

Zikewich, a member of Post 334 in Lake Orion, Mich., set up the original Peacoat Monument aboard the *Lexington* and carried a symbolic peacoat to reunions aboard the ship. The ship on which he once served as a radio operator is now docked in Pensacola, Fla., and used for training.

A second Peacoat Monument was coordinated by Zikewich and dedicated at Orion Veterans Memorial Park in Lake Orion on Veterans Day 2006. The names of his shipmates KIA on Nov. 5, 1944, are listed on

bricks in front of the bronze statue of a sailor's peacoat. As the memorial is intended to honor all military personnel buried at sea, additional engraved bricks can be purchased by veterans or family members.

"This is for veterans who were killed in all wars, buried in oceans around the world, and have never been given recognition," Zikewich said.

Post 334 in Lake Orion accumulated \$8,500 in its checking account for more than 10 years to help pay for a wall behind the memorial. Joe Mastromatteo, chairman of the Orion Veterans Memorial Committee and Post 334 trustee, accepted a check for the donation when the wall was officially revealed on July 28. Other organizations had contributed funds as well.

Although some individuals are symbolized in the images, no names are listed on the wall itself.

The Post has a long-standing relationship with the Orion Veterans Memorial. In April 2010, it presented \$25 McDonalds gift cards to each of eight volunteers who maintain the memorial.

A video displaying the Peacoat Monument is available online at www.orionveteransmemorial.com by clicking on the "Peacoat Monument" link on the left.

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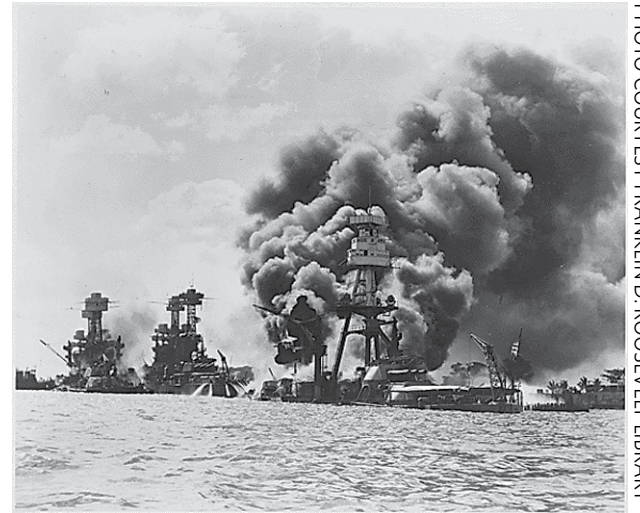


PHOTO COURTESY FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT LIBRARY

The *USS West Virginia* and the *USS Tennessee* were damaged and the *USS Arizona* sunk in the Dec. 7, 1941, Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor's "Battleship Row."

VFW Chief to Lay Wreath Memorializing 2,400 Killed at Pearl Harbor

This year, the nation will observe the 70th anniversary of the U.S. entry into World War II. It will be a solemn occasion.

On Dec. 7, 1941, some 2,403 Americans were killed and 1,178 wounded during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, located on the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

As it does every year, VFW will send its leader to represent the organization. The highlight of VFW Commander-in-Chief Richard De Noyer's visit will be a wreath laying at the *USS Arizona* Memorial. The Chief will be joined by representatives of VFW's Department of Hawaii.

De Noyer also will tour the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command at Pearl Harbor and visit VFW Post 3850 on Maui.

For VFW members who want to attend ceremonies marking the 70th anniversary, there are several sites worth visiting. The new *USS Arizona* Memorial Pearl Harbor Visitor Center is a good place to start.

The \$58 million facility serves as a one-stop shuttle hub for the WWII Valor in the Pacific National Monument sites—such as the *USS Arizona* Memorial, *USS Oklahoma* Memorial, *USS Utah* Memorial, the *Battleship Missouri* Memorial, the Pacific Aviation Museum and the *USS Bowfin* Submarine Museum and Park.

In addition, there are some 26 VFW Posts in Hawaii, with most located on the island of Oahu. For more information about National Park Service sites on Pearl Harbor, access www.nps.gov/valr/index.htm.



PHOTO BY EDWARD J. STEICHEN/NATIONAL ARCHIVES



U.S. NAVY PHOTOGRAPH/NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Main Photo: Sailors in the chartroom of the *USS Lexington* in December 1943 maneuver into enemy waters during strikes in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. **Inset:** The *USS Lexington* earned the Presidential Unit Citation and 11 battle stars for WWII service.

WANTED

OUTSTANDING SERVICE OFFICERS

We would like to hear about the hard work your Post and Department service officers are doing. If you would like to see them receive some much-deserved recognition, send us a brief note explaining why.

Please send information to:

Checkpoint

**Attn: Outstanding Service Officers
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111**

Phone: (816) 968-1171

E-mail: tdyhouse@vfw.org

VFW Posts Recognize Recent Vets at 10th Anniversary of Afghanistan War

IN HONOR OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY of the start of the war in Afghanistan, VFW members across the country paid tribute to fallen service members from their communities. Here is a sampling of some of the events Posts hosted to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice.



PHOTOS COURTESY POST 4289

Post 4289 in Winter Haven, Fla., honored families of fallen Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans from Florida by hosting a community day of remembrance on July 23.

The Post invited families and taught community members about the young men and women from Winter Haven who died. Local businesses donated money, food and beverages for the event.

Ledger Media Group, which includes local publications such as *The Lakeland Ledger* and the *Winter Haven News Chief*, printed a newspaper insert distributed to some 75,000 homes.

Post Commander Lou Kovack said the event produced about a dozen new members and a few transfers. "They said, 'I love the VFW, but I want to be at a Post that does something,'"

Kovack said. In addition to providing food and guest speakers, the Post brought in a traveling wall honoring Floridians who have died in Iraq or Afghanistan.

"The Honor and Remembrance program was successful beyond our wildest dreams," said Kovack. "We got nothing but praise from everyone in the community. It put us on the map a little bit."

PHOTO COURTESY POST 3225



Members of **Post 3225 in Clovis, Calif.,** dedicated a memorial on Saturday, Oct. 8, to the 11 service members from Clovis who have died in Afghanistan or Iraq in the past 10 years. The families of those killed received plaques during the dedication ceremony.

The Post also hosted a spaghetti dinner at the venue that benefitted the California State Veterans Home.



PHOTO BY MIKE RANDELL/THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Post 10906 in Gladstone, Mo., co-sponsored a traveling wall honoring service members from Missouri who lost their lives in either Iraq or Afghanistan since 9/11. The memorial was open to the public from Sept. 25 to Oct. 2 at the Gladstone Community Center.

City officials spoke at an opening ceremony on Sept. 25, in honor of the service members included on the wall.

PHOTO COURTESY POST 6689



On June 29, **Post 6689 in Essex Junction, Vt.,** hosted the Patriot Flag, a traveling flag memorial that flew in all 50 states before flying in Shanksville, Pa., Arlington, Va., and finally New York City on Sept. 11, 2011. The flag memorializes the first and second responders who died following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Adam Stein, senior vice commander at Post 6689, gave the keynote speech at the ceremony. Stein shared his experiences as a responder in New York City on Sept. 11., 2001. Some 100 people attended the event.

The Post held a barbeque open to the public, and Vermont Lieutenant Governor Phil Scott escorted the flag to its next location.

Ohio Community Welcomes Home Wounded Afghanistan Vet

PHOTOS COURTESY MIKE MASTELL/THE INK WELL



Josh Sommers, with his mother, Lisa, are welcomed July 1, 2011, at VFW Post 1067 in Ashland, Ohio, during a homecoming celebration. Sommers was wounded in Afghanistan on June 14, 2010, and spent the next year recovering in various hospitals. The Post gave Sommers a life membership during the ceremony.

ARMY SPC. JOSH SOMMERS knows well the inside of military and VA hospitals. He was wounded while serving with the 101st Airborne Division in Afghanistan on June 14, 2010, when the vehicle he was riding in was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade.

After that attack and in a coma, Sommers was transferred from one hospital to the next. His last hospital stay was at the Louis Stokes VA Hospital in Cleveland, about 45 miles from his new home in Ashland, Ohio.

Sommers, 24, regained consciousness in March, some nine months after the explosion that caused paralysis of the left side of his body. He also is blind and has significant hearing loss even with the assistance of hearing aids.

When Sommers was released from the hospital on July 1, 2011, veterans were ready to give him a

memorable welcome home. Patriot Guard motorcycle riders escorted him from the hospital down Interstate 71 and were met by the Ashland County Sheriff's Department, Ashland Police and Mifflin Police.

Once the caravan arrived in Ashland, hundreds of Ohioans lined the streets to cheer for Sommers, who was driven to VFW Post 1067 where he was presented with a life membership.

"Welcome home my friend," then-Post commander Jack Coleman told Sommers. "We look forward to helping you continue your journey."

Stephen Stuart, Ashland City Council president read a proclamation on behalf of Mayor Glen Stewart: "Sommers stood in our place for the cause of freedom, our freedom, and we now have the opportunity to show our gratitude to him for his bravery."

Others on hand for the festivities echoed that



Sommers enjoys the new deck put on his home courtesy of Operation Open Doors, a non-profit group that retrofits homes for the disabled.

sentiment.

"In this small town, we do a lot for our soldiers," said Patriot rider Jeff Drushel, of Ashland. "When you fight for our freedom, we make sure we take care of you."

Operation Open Doors—a non-profit organization that retrofits homes for the disabled—renovated Sommers' home including the installation of ramps and rails. The volunteer group widened doorways and remodeled the bathrooms.

All materials required to complete the project were donated by Associate General Contractors of Akron, Ohio.

Sommers' mom, Lisa, called the community support "unexpected and reassuring," noting that her son's recovery has been a "long, hard struggle."

"But I am encouraged by little signs of improvement every day," Lisa told the (Ashland) Times-Gazette. "He can understand people speaking to him if they speak very slowly. It takes a while for his brain to process conversation."

A 2005 graduate of nearby Loudonville High School where he played golf, baseball and basketball, Sommers is the second of that school's alumni to be wounded in Afghanistan since 2009.

E-mail jblankenship@vfw.org

'Remarkable Young Man'

Maryland Post Honors Quadruple Amputee

BOB GLOAD OF POST 8065 in Bowie, Md., read about former Marine Cpl. Todd Nicely and knew his fellow Post members would want to meet Nicely and help him in any way possible.

Nicely, a native of Arnold, Mo., is one of two known quadruple amputees from the Afghanistan War. He is in therapy at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. For now, Nicely and his wife, Crystal, are calling Silver Spring, Md., home.

In August, Nicely and Crystal were guests at a Post meeting and were presented with a check for \$1,000.

"He is a remarkable young man," Post Commander Bob West said. "We were really surprised when he got out of the car and walked into the Post rather than using a wheelchair."

Nicely was wounded while leading 12 Marines on a foot patrol near the town of Lakari in southern Afghanistan on March 26, 2010. After stepping on a pressure plate at the foot of a bridge, he remembers an explosion that knocked him on his back and the feel of water from a nearby canal splashing on his face.

Serving with 1st Sqd., 1st Plt., F Co., 2nd Bn., 2nd Marines, Nicely had been in Afghanistan for five months and had even led his Marines down that very road countless times.

Nicely has most of his left arm, intact from the wrist up. He has most of the upper part of his right arm. His right leg was severed just above the knee, while his left leg is gone just below the knee. His jaw also was broken.

Nicely, as well as his wife, also a former Marine, are members of VFW Post 2593 in Arnold.

E-mail jblankenship@vfw.org



PHOTO BY PAUL CONNOLLY

Harlan Tucker, Bob Gload and Post Commander Bob West, all of Post 8065 in Bowie, Md., present Todd Nicely and his wife, Crystal, with a \$1,000 check from the Post's Buddy Poppy Fund on Aug. 4. Nicely is one of two known quadruple amputees from the Afghanistan War. Wounded on March 26, 2010, Nicely is currently in rehab in Bethesda, Md. He and Crystal are both members of Post 2593 in Arnold, Mo.

Wisconsin Captures First Place in VFW's 2011 WebAward Contest

TWO DEPARTMENTS and two Posts earned honors this year in the 2011 VFW WebAward Competition. VFW's Communications Department, which coordinates the competition, announced the winners of the sixth annual contest in May.

In the Department category, Wisconsin won first place and the Department of the Pacific Areas received second place. In the Post/District competition, Post 5702 in Franklin Lakes, N.J., won first place and Post 5627 in College Park, Md., earned second place honors.

"With nearly 60 entries received, this year's contest proved especially difficult to judge," said Jerry Newberry, director of VFW Communications. "There was a number of quality websites submitted by our Posts, Departments and Districts."

The Communications Department judged websites on four criteria, each worth 25% of the total score:

- Is the site's navigation organized efficiently?
- Is the load time quick?
- Is the design professionally and aesthetically pleasing?
- Is the content well written and current?

The deadline for next year's contest will be April 27, 2012. See the "Extra! Extra!" section of the January/February issue of *Checkpoint* for more information about the 2012 competition.



VFW's Department of Wisconsin won first place in the 2011 Website Contest. Visit the site at www.vfwofwi.com.

DEPARTMENT 2ND PLACE

www.vfwdeptpacific.org



VFW's Department of Pacific Areas won second place in Department category for the 2011 Website Contest.

POST/DISTRICT 1ST PLACE

www.vfwpost5702.org



Post 5702 in Franklin Lakes, N.J., won first place in Post/District category of the 2011 Website Contest.

POST/DISTRICT 2ND PLACE

www.vfwpost5627.org



Post 5627 in College Park, Md., won second place in Post/District category of the 2011 Website Contest.

'My Family is my First Priority'

VFW Reunites Family at Michigan Speedway

WHEN MICHIGAN Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Richard Kimball was medically discharged from the military due to hearing loss, things went from bad to worse. His civilian job was dissolved while he was serving with the 1073rd Maintenance Company in Iraq in 2010. He found it difficult to find a new job. With a wife and three children, Kimball found it hard to pay the family bills.

Kimball applied for a grant through VFW's *Unmet Needs* program and was approved. The grant allowed Kimball to pay rent and utilities. *Unmet Needs* also provided a \$500 Walmart gift card for food and necessities.

Not long after the grant came through, Kimball got more good news: he found a job. Unfortunately, the job was located in North Dakota, which meant he would be away from his family back in Brooklyn, Mich., for extended periods of time. (The family did not re-locate due to the children's schooling.)

As the family was working to make the best of the situation, they found out they had been chosen from a database of *Unmet Needs* recipients to receive a special honor as the VIP Military Family for a weekend at Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn.

The VFW Foundation provided the airfare to fly Kimball to Michigan for the trip, which just happened to be on Father's Day weekend.

"I never asked to be rich, just food and clothes and a roof over our heads and my bills paid on time," Kimball said. "My family is my first priority in my life, no matter where I am."

As part of the VIP treatment, the Kimballs received complimentary accommodations in an RV at the speedway, pace-car rides, garage tours and access to drivers' meetings. They also were recognized onstage during the pre-race ceremonies to represent the VFW Foundation's Salute to Military Fathers.

E-mail jblankenship@vfw.org



Michigan Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Richard Kimball and his family enjoyed Father's Day weekend at Michigan Speedway thanks to the efforts of the VFW Foundation's Return the Favor program.

PHOTO BY CIA STOCK PHOTO

Wounded Troops Attend Maryland's Convention

PHOTO COURTESY JAMES BROWN



Sharon Snead with Post 6054 in Aberdeen, Md., was one of many VFW volunteers to greet wounded troops at Maryland's Department convention in Ocean City, Md., in June. Some 56 troops and family members were treated with hospitality for two and a half days.

FOR ABOUT SIX YEARS NOW, wounded troops recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., as well as at Ft. Meade in Maryland and at Ft. Belvoir in Virginia, have had the opportunity for some rest and relaxation in the company of VFW and Ladies Auxiliary.

According to Tom Kimball, National Military Services chairman for the Department of Maryland, the troops are bused to Ocean City on the state's eastern coast for two and half days of beach fun during the Department's annual convention. Families are included, too.

"You would really be surprised what people are willing to do if you just ask."

—Tom Kimball, National Military Services chairman, Department of Maryland

Kimball said the state pays for a bus to pick up the troops and has the Maryland state police escort the troops to a Post where they eat breakfast before getting back on the road. Once they arrive in Ocean City, they are greeted with a special reception before being driven to their hotel rooms.

This year 56 attended. Each person was given a beach bag complete with sunglasses, sunscreen, beach towels and even beach balls for the little ones. Most Posts in Maryland offer spending money to the troops and their families.

Kimball recounted a story of a female double amputee who "couldn't have been older than her mid-20s." He said she was very depressed when she arrived, and her spirit was low.

"After just a little while she left," he said. "But she came back and had put on her prosthetics and she ended up dancing up a storm."

He also told of two soldiers who had their dogs with them. So Kimball, who has a Jack Russell Terrier, went to his own vet and asked for a donation. "I figured as much [money] as I spend with him, he could help me out," he joked.

The vet offered up two 50-pound bags of dog food.

"You would really be surprised what people are willing to do if you just ask," Kimball said.

This all began as a spaghetti dinner at the Malone House at Walter Reed several years ago. He said that dinner spurred him to action to get the troops out of the hospital environment for a couple of days.

"As long as they want to come to our convention, we'll keep doing it," he said.

E-mail jblankenship@vfw.org

Christmas Dinner for Troops

Massachusetts Post Gathers Generations of Vets for Christmas Dinners

THIS DECEMBER MARKS the 10th year that members of Post 2016 in Amesbury, Mass., have been hosting a Christmas dinner for troops.

The idea was conceived in 2001 by Korean War vet and then-Post Commander John Carter. Carter recalled being home at Christmas while still in the military and later finding out that several of his buddies also were home for the holidays. Carter says he wishes he would have known so that they could have all gotten together.

With the inaugural dinner, Carter thought it would be nice to match up school friends serving overseas who happened to be home at Christmas. That first year only three local service members attended.

Post Quartermaster Ski Iworsky said the low attendance was most likely because word didn't get out soon enough.

"The next year we did a better job spreading the word about the dinner," said Iworsky, a Vietnam vet. "We changed the name of the event to the 'Support the Troops Christmas Dinner.'"

It has evolved into a ceremony of sorts, too, according to Iworsky. He says veterans of past wars come together to thank this newer generation of vets.

The dinner is held at the Holy Family Church Parish Hall in Amesbury. Because the facility is so large, all area active-duty and reserve troops and their families are invited. All members of the Post, as well as their families and local veterans, also are invited. An average of 150 people attend the dinners.

Iworsky said the military personnel are asked to wear their uniforms and veterans are asked to wear an article of clothing distinguishing them as such.

There is live music and guest speakers. All service members also are called up individually and recognized. Massachusetts politicians such as Rep. John Tierney (D-Mass.) and state representative Mike Costello have spoken at the dinners.

"This is an opportunity for service members to feel the pride of their service," said Iworsky, whose son is a Marine Iraq War vet, "and for their families to see that their service is appreciated."

While VFW plans the event and its members are the main source of volunteers, the event is funded by donations from community businesses. Boy Scouts and high school students also volunteer their time for the event.

Iworsky said because of these factors, this is an event that could be emulated by other Posts regardless of size and finances.

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PHOTOS COURTESY POST 2016



Above: Post 2016 Quartermaster Ski Iworsky visits with a woman who had just enlisted in the Navy and a Marine during the Post's Support the Troops Christmas Dinner last December. **Left:** Past Post commander John Carter welcomes troops to the dinner held at the Holy Family Church Parish Hall also in Amesbury, Mass.

Posts with the Most VFW POSTS OF 1,000 MEMBERS OR MORE AS OF OCT. 10, 2011

Rank	Post No.	Location	Members
1	27	Wiesbaden, Germany	2,559
2	1114	Evansville, IN	2,116
3	1503	Dale City, VA	1,903
4	9972	Sierra Vista, AZ	1,704
5	4372	Odessa, TX	1,561
6	2485	Angeles City, Philippines	1,530
7	6506	Rosedale, MD	1,473
8	4647	North Highlands, CA	1,439
9	392	Virginia Beach, VA	1,423
10	9785	Eagle River, AK	1,402

11	8862	Vicenza, Italy	1,355
12	628	Sioux Falls, SD	1,300
13	1146	St Clair Shores, MI	1,287
14	972	Terre Haute, IN	1,265
15	7234	Ocean View, DE	1,237
16	63	Boise, ID	1,156
17	2111	Chula Vista, CA	1,154
18	10097	Fort Myers Beach, FL	1,140
19	2503	Omaha, NE	1,132
20	1273	Rapid City, SD	1,121
21	1599	Chambersburg, PA	1,117
22	1512	Lemon Grove, CA	1,094
23	10436	Kitzingen, Germany	1,091
24	6873	Abilene, TX	1,073
25	10692	Grafenwoehr, Germany	1,063
26	549	Tucson, AZ	1,062
27	401	Albuquerque, NM	1,060
28	1326	Bismarck, ND	1,056
29	788	Cedar Rapids, IA	1,047
30	7686	Alamogordo, NM	1,043
31	4809	Norfolk, VA	1,031
32	1296	Bloomington, MN	1,027
33	969	Tacoma, WA	1,017
33	8951	West York, PA	1,017
35	10047	North Las Vegas, NV	1,012

1,138 Recognized to Date

World War II Veterans Leading VFW Posts from Coast to Coast

THE CHECKPOINT STAFF EXTENDS A HEARTY "THANK YOU" to all our World War II Post leaders, members and veterans. And we want to recognize those who still devote time and energy to VFW causes.

Listed below are 50 WWII veterans who serve VFW Posts in official capacities. Checkpoint has recognized a total of 1,138 such Post leaders since the March/April 2009 issue. We will continue to feature this section in subsequent issues until every WWII Post leader whose name is submitted is recognized.

If you would like to recognize a WWII veteran who *currently* serves your Post, please send us his or her name, official Post position and your Post's location. Send information to:

Checkpoint
Attn: WWII Leaders
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
E-mail: tdyhouse@vfw.org



Name	Position	Post/Location
Robert Alkire	Commander	Post 281, Fair Lawn, N.J.
Herbert Altounian	Surgeon	Post 7165, Clifton, N.J.
Dick Bean	Commander	Post 404, Mohave Valley, Ariz.
Robert Beggin	Trustee	Post 998, Freeport, Ill.
George C. Berry	Quartermaster	Post 8142, Winterset, Iowa
Henry Boettner	Trustee	Post 998, Freeport, Ill.
Ed Bravo	Trustee	Post 11548, Huntington Beach, Calif.
James Carrick	Jr. Vice Cmdr.	Post 2037, Green Bay, Wis.
Robert Chapman	Trustee	Post 4266, Parker, Colo.
Henry Craft	Service Officer	Post 5933, Ghent, N.Y.
Russell J. Duca	Honor Guard	Post 7165, Clifton, N.J.
N.T. Duncan	Trustee	Post 4881, Ripley, Miss.
Paul Gages	Hosp. Comm. Chrmn.	Post 7651, Ontario, Ohio
Tony M. Garcia	Sr. Vice Cmdr.	Post 11091, Winters, Calif.
Daniel E. Gardner	Judge Advocate	Post 4637, Martinsville, Va.
Thomas Gattis	Trustee	Post 4881, Ripley, Miss.
Herbert S. Gibbs	Trustee	Post 4637, Martinsville, Va.
Sebastian Hafer	Judge Advocate	Post 15, Gettysburg, Pa.
Harold Haywood	Commander	Post 11091, Winters, Calif.
Ron Henkel	Quartermaster	Post 4266, Parker, Colo.
Clarence King	Surgeon	Post 10210, Bristol, Fla.
Lawrence King	Chaplain	Post 10038, Lyndonville, Vt.
Frank Kubas	Trustee	Post 7565, Hooversville, Pa.
Bob Kuhn	Chaplain	Post 8739, Oregon, Ill.
John L. Land	Commander	Post 3223, Butler, Ala.

Name	Position	Post/Location
Dick Little	Officer of the Day	Post 8739, Oregon, Ill.
Kenneth Lucas	Commander	Post 4767, Aliceville, Ala.
Lawrence Luna	Trustee	Post 812, El Paso, Texas
Renato Massei	Trustee	Post 11091, Winters, Calif.
Floyd L. McCary	Quartermaster	Post 3223, Butler, Ala.
Joseph Montino	Sr. Vice Cmdr.	Post 2193, Melrose Park, Ill.
Norm Nelson	Color Guard	Post 8739, Oregon, Ill.
Harry E. Newman	Trustee	Post 3913, Kendrick, Idaho
Lupe Novak	Chaplain	Post 3922, Wadena, Minn.
Raymond C. O'Brien	Service Officer	Post 529, Somerville, Mass.
Robert G. Patterson	Officer of the Day	Post 3913, Kendrick, Idaho
William Peasley	Chaplain	Post 307, Rochester, N.Y.
Robert D. Peterson	Chaplain	Post 2759, Lengby, Minn.
Donald Piasecki	Service Officer	Post 6992, Sauk Rapids, Minn.
Oliver Putikka	Officer of the Day	Post 3922, Wadena, Minn.
Mike Rock	Trustee	Post 220, Mays Landing, N.J.
Lester R. Smith	Guard	Post 4637, Martinsville, Va.
Russ Smith	Quartermaster	Post 3361, Ventnor City, N.J.
Wally Steed	Jr. Vice Cmdr.	Post 8739, Oregon, Ill.
Robert Steeger	Judge Advocate	Post 430, Amarillo, Texas
George J. Stein	Chaplain	Post 5638, Stayton, Ore.
Earl Straley	Honor Guard	Post 8739, Oregon, Ill.
Lee Thompson	Officer of the Day	Post 10210, Bristol, Fla.
George Winkler	Surgeon	Post 15, Gettysburg, Pa.
Clifford Wyche	Chaplain	Post 7612, Atlanta, Ga.