

# 'I Never Feel Out of Place'

## VFW Washington Post Elects First Female Officer

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Female veterans continue to make great strides within the ranks of VFW. More than ever, seasoned leaders within the organization welcome women with the realization that they, too, are a part of VFW's future.

This is exactly what happened at Post 7511 in Monroe, Wash., where the members met Global War on Terrorism veteran Jaymie Weber in January.

Weber, who served nine years in the Air Force, saw a Facebook notice about a pancake breakfast at the Post — about 35 miles northeast of Seattle — and decided to check it out.

"I stepped out of my introverted shell a little bit," said Weber, a mom of two daughters, ages 3 and 5. "I showed up and about half of the people were Vietnam vets and the other half younger."

Weber signed up to be a member, and it wasn't long before she was viewed as a "doer." She got the home-improvement retailer Lowe's to donate 43 flags to the Post just by asking. Post leaders were so impressed, they asked her to become quartermaster. She was elected in mid-2017, becoming the Post's first female elected officer.

"Everyone has been open to my ideas," said Weber, who earned her VFW eligibility in 2002 in Oman. "I never feel out of place. I feel more like where I need to be when I'm with these guys."

### Communication is Key to Attracting Members

Weber joined the Air Force when she was 19. In part, she did so to see the world and earn money for her education. But her family's history of military service was the main reason for her service.

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“My grandfather was in the Navy, and my dad was a Marine,” she said. My sister was in the Army. So I decided on the Air Force.”

While Weber never intended to stay in for nine years, she did so to support the efforts during the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

“I wanted to do whatever I could to serve my country,” said Weber, who left the Air Force in 2007 as a technical sergeant.

She went to work at Crane Aerospace, but the company soon went through several rounds of staff reductions, and being relatively new, Weber was laid off.

Looking for a new direction, Weber started her own business, Lashes by Jaymie, where she crafts fuller eyelashes and brows for her clients.

She said that after looking at people’s closed eyes all day, it’s nice to enjoy the camaraderie of her fellow VFW members.

While there are only three women in the Post, Weber is more concerned about attracting younger members in general. She wants to see Iraq and Afghanistan veterans get involved and support the Post.

“We still have this stigma that VFW is a bunch of old guys,” Weber said. “I don’t want people to think that.”

Weber said communication needs to become more digitized. Using social media channels more at the local level is key, she added, noting that Facebook introduced her to VFW.

“There has to be a way to find these veterans so they don’t have to come and find us,” Weber said. “VFW is an organization with an amazing foundation, and we need fresh ideas.”

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