

New Garden State Post Hits the Ground Running

Even though VFW Post 12165, chartered on Oct. 19, is less than one year old, it doesn't stop members from making an impact on their community

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Post Commander Luddie Austin, an Army veteran and retired Trenton police officer, said he is glad to finally have “VFW representation” in his hometown.

“After I came back from Iraq, it came to my attention that Trenton didn't have a VFW,” Austin said. “I thought it was best for me and like-minded veterans to start a Post charter in our hometown.”

Austin, who served in Iraq in 2004 with C Co., 759th MP Bn., 89th MP Bde., originally joined a nearby Post, but wanted to have a Post in his community. He said it is important for Post members to represent VFW at community events.

That is why he participated in the Trenton's annual half marathon, 10K and 5K event. Austin and Joe Thorpe, Post 12165 trustee, ran in the event – Austin the 10K and Thorpe the half marathon. Both represented their VFW Post along the way. Austin said Thorpe and he crossed the line at the same time “as a sign of unity.”

Austin also said Post 12165 will be represented at Trenton's upcoming Litter March in June.

“We have Post members that are eager to participate in beautifying our city,” Austin said. “All of this helps promote the brand of VFW.”

Austin said one of the reasons he and others started the Post was to work with schools in Trenton.

“None of the schools were even aware of the Voice or Democracy or Patriot's Pen scholarships,” Austin said. “We are also in the process of starting a community breakfast

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program that gives members of the community and their families a chance to mingle with veterans of the Post. The goal is to get people out in the community instead of enclosed in their home.”

Another activity that Post 12165 members participated in included donating Christmas presents and a meal to a needy family, as well as to Capital Health in Trenton, N.J., on Christmas Eve.

“We donated toys to the pediatric ward of the hospital to children who were not going to be home for Christmas,” Austin said. “We also provided meals to the nursing staff who were away from their families that day.”

Austin said members currently are in the process of obtaining a building for the Post. But, a Trenton restaurant, 1911 Smokehouse Bar-B-Que, allows the members to meet at its facility for meetings until the Post finds a permanent home.

“They allow us to do it at no cost,” Austin said. “We really appreciate them and everyone else in the community that has supported us.”

This article is featured in the 2018 May/June issue of [Checkpoint](#), and was written by [Dave Spiva](#), senior writer, VFW magazine. Photo courtesy of Luddie Austin.