

Husband and Wife Team Lead VFW Post

At this Texas Post, the new commander is just the fourth woman to take the top leadership position and she was elected after her husband completed his term as commander

Oct 17, 2019

Post 9191 in Killeen, Texas, made history in June when Commander Carlo Davis relinquished the gavel to newly elected Post Commander Lee Ann Davis — his wife.

It's the first time in the Post's 60-year history that a married couple has led the Post for consecutive years.

"It was an awesome and historic experience to pass the gavel to my intelligent and beautiful wife," said Carlo, who joined VFW in 2004.

Lee Ann, who became a VFW member in 2006, said she's one of a small group of women to ever lead the Post.

"It was very overwhelming and a humbling feeling," Lee Ann said of being elected as Post commander. "Of our Post's 60 years of history, there have only been four female Commanders."

Carlo, who is on active duty as an Army senior master chief warrant officer working as a field artillery targeting officer, said he joined VFW because of "comradeship." Also, he said several personal mentors belonged to the Killeen Post.

Earning All-American status at the 120th National Convention in Orlando and a recruiting nod for adding 251 members, Carlo said that in order to attract younger members, VFW needs to provide incentives that appeal to younger vets.

"These younger veterans need to see younger members such as myself in leadership

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positions,” said Carlo, 44, who attended VFW’s national convention with Lee Ann. “When the younger vets see the VFW electing and appointing younger members, this provides motivation to get them to join and get involved. This gives the younger members something to strive for within the organization.”

In recognizing the preferences of younger veterans, Carlo said the Post went smoke-free last October. A cigar smoker himself, Carlo said Post members built a deck outside for the smokers so no one felt excluded.

As the new commander of the Post with 1,200-plus members, Lee Ann is working on recruiting more female and younger vets. She believes VFW Posts have a responsibility to create a “safe environment” for veterans. “I want veterans to feel like they are at home,” said Lee Ann, who served in the Army from 1993-2015. “They find that at our Post. I will always advocate for my comrades.”

When Lee Ann joined VFW in 2006, she did so for the camaraderie. What she has found in her time as a member since is that VFW needs to be “more open to change” in order to attract a younger, more diverse membership.

“The VFW needs to learn to accept change and stop using the excuse of, ‘That’s how we have always done it in the past,’” Lee Ann said. “This year was my first time at a national convention, and I feel like it should be geared more for assisting local Posts. Younger people need to be brought in on the national level. A lot of female and younger vets are deterred because they think, ‘Where do I fit in?’”

In working to get more youthful leaders at the Killeen Post, Lee Ann has started a mentorship program, where younger members shadow the leadership.

A pressing concern, she said, is that the Post home is physically falling down. She put out a plea on Facebook for community carpenters, electricians, painters and plumbers who would be willing to donate their time on Post repairs.

“I’m going to wake up our community and let them know how vital our VFW is to the community,” Lee Ann said. “On holidays alone, we feed almost 700 people from our area at the Post.” Carlo deployed this month to Iraq. He was previously there in 2003 and 2007-2008 with the 3rd Infantry Division. In 2012, he was in Afghanistan with the 25th Infantry Division. His VFW eligibility was initially earned in Korea in 1995 with the 2nd Infantry Division. He also was in Korea in 2001 and 2004-2007.

“You have to earn your membership within the VFW,” Carlo said. “Many have sacrificed a lot of blood, sweat and tears for our beloved country. I love being able to help, aid and assist my fellow veterans and active-duty service members.”

Like Carlos, Lee Ann earned her membership eligibility in Korea in 1995 with the 6th Cavalry Brigade. She continued her service in Korea from 2003-2006. In 2009, Lee Ann deployed to Mosul, Iraq, with the 130th Engineer Brigade.

The duo met in the Army and became friends, before getting married in 2009. As a retiree, Lee Ann is devoting all of her time to serving veterans through VFW.

“I’m passionate about helping my fellow veterans and my community,” she said. “I know how it feels to be left behind, and I don’t want to leave anyone behind.”

This article is featured in the October 2019 issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor for VFW magazine.