

\$5 Million for New VFW Post

Arkansas's oldest VFW Post looks toward the future

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A VFW Post in Arkansas has outgrown its home in Van Buren and plans to build a new facility for its centennial in 2025.

Post 1322 Quartermaster Matthew Hicks, who served in the Army from 1994 to 2004, said the project, dubbed "Vision 2025," aims to create a Post that serves veterans and community members. The project will cost about \$5 million and take a few years to complete.

"For the past couple of years we've been growing, and our meeting attendance has been outstanding," Hicks said. "For a nonsmoking, nondrinking Post, the only thing we do is community work."

Hicks, who served in the Afghanistan War with the 485th Preventive Medicine Detachment in 2003, said that, on average, about 45 VFW members attend monthly Post meetings and that there are about 220 Post members.

"Our parking lot gave up long ago," Hicks said. "Our Auxiliary went from having six members to about 60 in the past five years. They have an average monthly meeting attendance of about 25."

Even when the Post tried setting Post and Auxiliary meetings for different nights, members had trouble finding a place to park.

"With only 18 parking spots and a 2,000-square-foot building, we were busting at the seams," Hicks said. "Our building is just too small."

That's why Post 1322 members are planning for the future. Hicks said plans for the new Post home began in September. The Post put together a committee of 18 hand-selected people and invited some nonmember residents of the community.

"We told everyone that money is no option," Hicks said. "We wanted them to come up with

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as many ideas as possible and to think outside the box.”

The committee came up with a concept that would include doctor’s offices, a physical therapy clinic, a gymnasium and classrooms.

“We were able to find an architect that volunteered to put it together for us,” Hicks said.

Other plans for the new Post home include an amphitheater for flag retirement ceremonies, a reflecting pool, a walking trail, sports fields and a community storm shelter.

“We want to build a community storm shelter with a FEMA grant and make it a meeting place for our Auxiliary so they can have their own space,” Hicks said. “We want to build classrooms and make them available to schools. We want to invites classes to take a field trip to our Post where we can teach kids about military history.”

Hick said Post members plan on accepting donations and seeking donors to fund Post 1322’s campus.

“We are just looking for every out-of-the-box idea to raise enough funds for this project,” Hicks said.

This article was featured in the March/April 2019 issue of VFW Checkpoint. If you're a Post, District or Department Commander and aren't receiving the Checkpoint e-newsletter, please contact the VFW magazine at magazine@vfw.org.