

'We Are Always Making a Difference'

An All-American Post in Maryland created a delicious local tradition amidst the global pandemic in 2020

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In the small town of Clinton, Maryland, about 20 miles south of the nation's capital, Friday afternoons set the stage for what's become a local tradition.

Amidst social and economic hardships brought on by the global pandemic in 2020, VFW Post 9376 in Clinton presented its community with an alternative to social gatherings by hosting drive-by, fried fish lunches.

Recognized among the locals through an assortment of cars in a line stretching down the road from the parking lot entrance of Post 9376, the weekly fried fish lunches were meant to offer a hot, delicious escape from a reality gripping the country.

"People can drive up, place their orders, pay and not have to get out of their vehicles," said Post 9376 Commander Michael Eason. "By the time they drive around the building, we bring their fish orders out hot and ready. The community loves it."

Eason, who retired from the Army in 2015 after more than 40 years in the service, spearheaded the project following the initial lockdown set in place nationwide to combat the spread of COVID-19.

The VFW Life member, who also is an All-State and All-American Post commander, understood the important role his Post played in and around the community of Clinton. Despite mandated to halt in-person gatherings in March 2020, Eason found drive-by lunches would provide the community a social gathering alternative, a form of income for the Post and a way to continue assisting veterans with VA claims and other manageable tasks.

More than a year later, the driveby fish lunches remain a Friday afternoon staple among locals in Clinton.

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The revenue generated also has helped Post 9376 stay afloat economically by raising \$57,237.

“The community knows this and they’ve supported us wholeheartedly,” Eason added. “We are forever indebted to our community. We are now known as ‘The Community Post’ thanks to the efforts of our members, Auxiliary and our bar manager.”

Post 9376 also began registering locals for COVID-19 vaccines during their drive-by lunches. The Post’s initiative started in September 2020 after partnering with Prince George County and the local VA.

“As individuals drove up for the fish lunches, county officials were on site registering them for the vaccine if needed,” Eason said. “This has proven very helpful, as hundreds of community members have since pre-registered.”

Eason also credits the boost in publicity brought on by the driveby lunches for not only growing the Post’s presence in the community, but helping it surge in membership numbers. In the past year, Post 9376 has welcomed about 100 new members, according to Post records.

He added that serving fellow veterans and the local community does not have to be a gargantuan task. Be it offering someone the relief of not needing to make lunch at home or giving people hope by providing some safety and stability in an uncertain time, Eason believes the community will always take notice. He says it is a perfect example of VFW’s #StillServing initiative.

“It proves that as VFW members, we are always making a difference in our community,” Eason said. “And the community knows. We’ve had locals come up and tell us how grateful they are for what we are doing.”

This article is featured in the 2021 November/December issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Ismael Rodriguez Jr.](#), senior writer for VFW magazine.