

VFWs Cooties Continue to Be 'Busier than a Bee'

Coming off its 100 year of service, the group helped remodel VFW's National Home for Children last year and is devoted to its mission of comforting hospitalized veterans

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Darin Combs, Supreme Commander of the Cooties, is on a quest to grow membership in VFW's venerable ancillary organization. He encourages VFW members who are interested in becoming a Cootie to contact the suborganization's Headquarters or a local Pup Tent, the Cooties' version of a Post.

"Last year, we started with 9,368 members, but we plan on having more than 10,000 by our convention," Combs said. "We want to keep adding more members, and we are reaching out to VFW Departments that don't have a Grand at the state level." (A Grand is the Cooties version of a VFW Department.)

Only VFW members are eligible to become a member of the Cooties, and VFW Auxiliary members are eligible for the group's Auxiliary.

The Military Order of the Cooties traditionally holds its convention immediately after the VFW National Convention. Combs said each year, the Supreme Commander has a special project that the organization works on.

"This year, my project was to remodel the child care center at the VFW National Home," Combs said. "We work closely with the National Home. We try to help them with anything that's needed."

The National Home's child care center serves as a daycare for resident children while their parents are working. Combs said the Cooties were able to raise about \$8,000 for the project. Combs added that the group also is known for visiting veterans in VA hospitals and veterans

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“We focus primarily on hospital work,” Combs said. “We have a saying: ‘Keep ’em Smilin’ in Beds of White.’”

Combs said Cooties members embody one of the group’s mottos, “Closer than a Brother or Sister, Busier than a Bee.”

“Cooties are very active in the community,” Combs said. “Simply put, we are doers.”

Combs said because of COVID-19 restrictions, the Cooties have had to adjust the way they visit veterans. Cards and flowers can still be sent but visiting with veterans is crucial to their mission.

“Just giving those veterans a simple phone call means the world to them,” Combs said. “A two-minute phone call turns into a 20-minute conversation where we talk about our military service. A lot of times, these veterans haven’t had visitors in months, so we try to fill that void.”

Last year, The Military Order of the Cooties celebrated its 100th anniversary.

The incoming Supreme Commander of the Cooties, Supreme Senior Vice Commander Olin Parks, said he plans on continuing the group’s growth during his tenure. He said the group will continue to visit veterans throughout the year.

“We exist to make sure that veterans know that a group of their fellow veterans care about them,” Parks said. “We just have to give our time, and that makes the veteran’s day.”

This article is featured in the June/July 2021 issue of [VFW magazine](#). It was written by [Dave Spiva](#), associate editor, for the VFW magazine.